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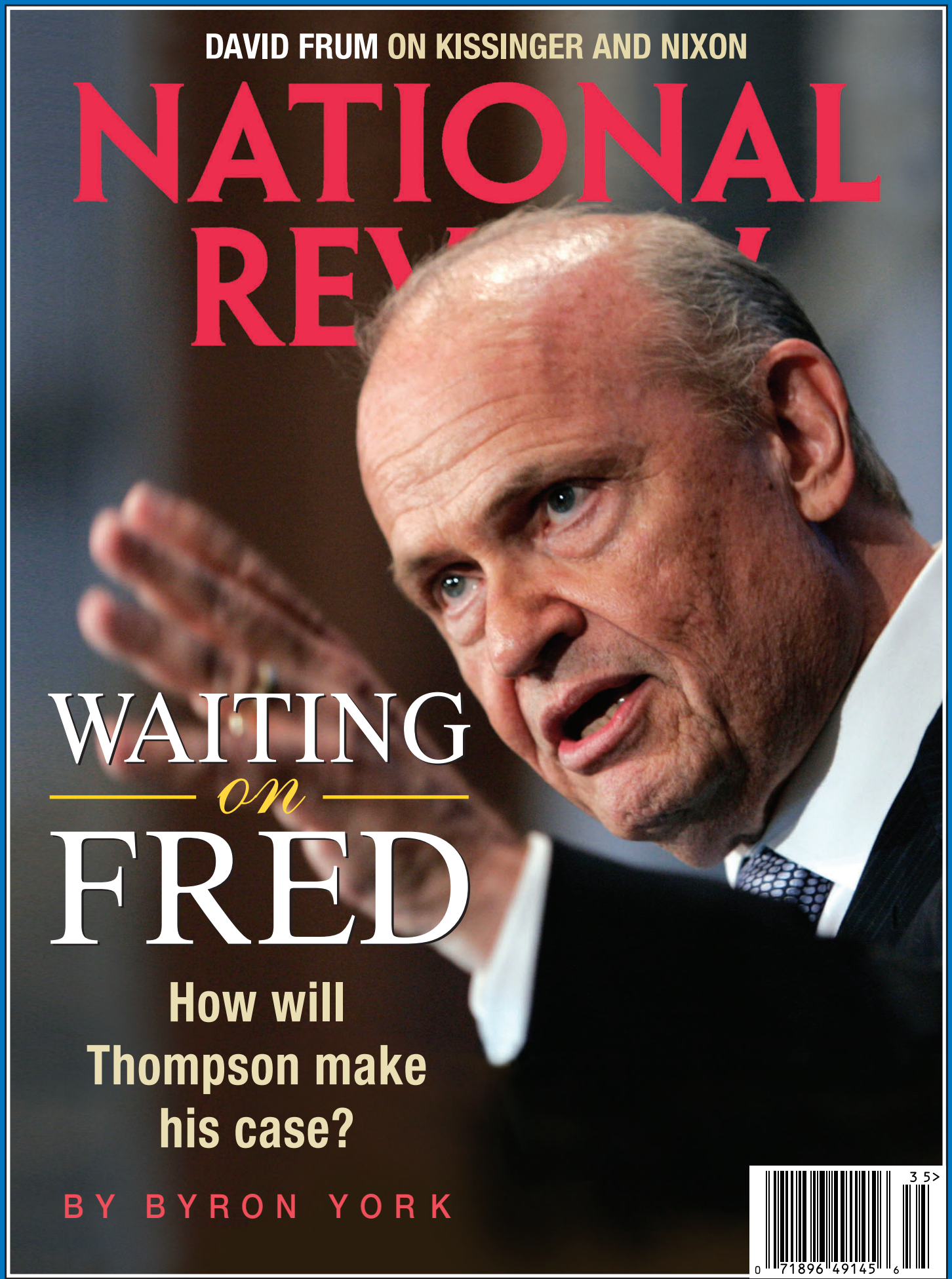

WAITING *on* FRED

How will Thompson make his case?

BY BYRON YORK

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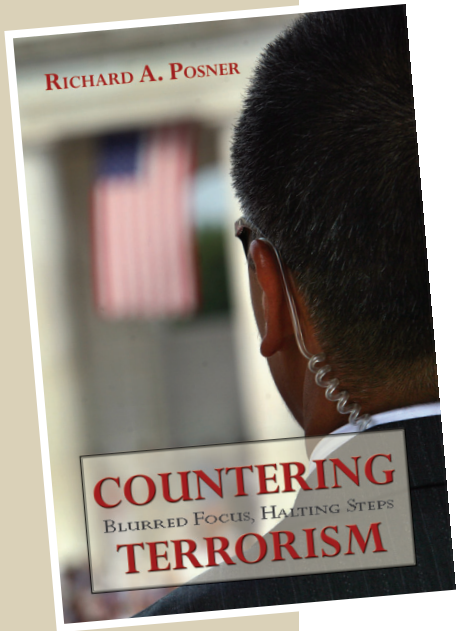

Countering Terrorism

Blurred Focus, Halting Steps

RICHARD A. POSNER

"As Judge Posner's book ably demonstrates, reform of the U.S. intelligence community has a long way to go, notwithstanding the recent Intelligence Reform Act passed into law by the Congress. His analysis of 'three cultures" and the problems of domestic intelligence are especially outstanding."

—William E. Odom, Lieutenant General, U.S. Army (Ret.)

In this third book of a series on intelligence reform, Judge Richard A. Posner evaluates the measures that have been taken in the last two years to implement the Intelligence Reform Act of 2004, which decreed a wholesale reorganization of the intelligence system. *Countering Terrorism* also addresses broader issues in the struggle against terrorism, such as the failure of criminal law enforcement and the difficulty of devising criteria for allocating counterterrorist funds. Although some successes have been achieved in the effort to make our intelligence system more coherent and effective, notably with respect to intelligence analysis and "open source" intelligence, progress overall has been slow, owing in major part to the deflection of senior officials in the intelligence community from overall supervision and coordination to short-term crisis management. Of particular concern, domestic intelligence remains in serious disarray, dangerously exposing the nation to the emergent threat of homegrown, as distinct from foreign-initiated, terrorism.

Countering Terrorism is copublished with Rowman & Littlefield.

Richard A. Posner is a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals in Chicago and a senior lecturer at the University of Chicago Law School. He is the author of hundreds of articles and dozens of books, including *Uncertain Shield: The U.S. Intelligence System in the Throes of Reform* (2006) and *Preventing Surprise Attacks: Intelligence Reform in the Wake of 9/11* (2005).

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NATIONAL REVIEW

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■ COVER STORY

Is He for Real?

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Until now, Fred Thompson, the former star of TV's *Law & Order*, has conducted an unconventional and brilliant campaign of "testing the waters." But soon his campaign-to-be will become more traditional. Unlike his opponents, who have been running hard for months now, Thompson will be learning on the fly, and he'll have to convince Republican voters that he's the real conservative in the race. It's an enormous gamble. These days, Fred Thompson is a man with no room for error. *By Byron York*

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letters to the editor

EXCUSES, EXCUSES

Ralph Peters's article on ethnic cleansing ("Better Than Genocide," August 13) is a disappointment. The moral truth it contains is trivial, and can be captured in a single sentence: It is better to dispossess a man of his home and property than it is to murder him. The policy implication is equally trivial, and captured with equal concision: We should allow non-lethal ethnic cleansing, even as we lament it, if the *only* alternative is to allow genocide. Peters would have an interesting point if he argued that such choices exist in the world today. But no such example comes to mind (no, not Iraq, where the sectarian killings—though awful—are not a genocide, and where the surge seems to be making slow but steady progress toward improving the security situation). I fear that arguments such as Peters's tend, in practice, to do little more than excuse non-lethal ethnic cleansing where we lack the will to prevent it.

Nestor José Astel
Island Park, Idaho

BLEEDING KUOMINTANG

I disagree with Jay Nordlinger's suggestion in his piece "Taiwan's Two Dozen" (August 13) that, although Taiwan once "did not have a proper legislature," it does have one now.

As the BBC reports, "Taiwan's parliament, which is split between two major political factions, often descends into physical violence." In a recent clash in May, members of the Democratic Progressive Party approached the lectern of the speaker of the Legislative Yuan, Wang Jin-pyng, and prevented him from making a speech. Wang's fellow Kuomintang members came to his aid by attacking the DPP representatives. Video clips show a parliament in chaos where well-dressed politicians climbed on top of each other's shoulders to exchange blows.

Inhibiting free discussion and using violence to resolve disputes are not characteristics of a proper legislature. Unless the attack on Charles Sumner by Preston Brooks is held to be the hallmark of a democracy, Taiwan has a long way to go before its parliament can be considered a proper one.

Alex Yang
Statesboro, Ga.

JAY NORDLINGER RESPONDS: Things can indeed get hairy in Taiwan's parliament. But I suggest that what is important is found in the BBC sentence quoted above: "Taiwan's parliament, which is split between two major political factions . . ." Real parliaments are split between factions. False ones—like Cuba's, like the PRC's—are not. One tires of making elementary points, but the need to do so will apparently never end.

CRUISING FOR BOOZE

Neither Michael Moore nor Jay Nordlinger explored the delicious irony in the opening song of *Sicko*, "I'll See You in C-U-B-A" ("The Myth of Cuban Health Care," July 30). Irving Berlin wrote the music and lyrics of the song for the Ziegfeld Follies of 1920. Berlin wasn't traveling to Cuba for medical care, but rather for booze. The jaunty tune laments the fruit of the Volstead Act: prohibition. And, to further enrage the health police, one bar even lauds that land "Where dark-eyed Stellas / Light their fellas' Panatellas." Cheers, amigos!

Donald C. France
Stuart, Fla.

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Dr. Harold O.J. Brown

"He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord" Acts 11:24.

1933-2007

When God uses one life to influence thousands for immeasureable good, we gratefully rejoice. With thankfulness to God and on behalf of the women who have chosen life, we celebrate in the vision, life and writings of Dr. Harold O.J. Brown.

In 1975, Dr. Brown started the Christian Action Council, now known as Care Net, a Christian Network of Care for Women in Crisis. Today, Care Net is the nation's largest network of crisis pregnancy centers in North America. To read more about the life and legacy of Dr. Harold O.J. Brown, please visit www.care-net.org.

CARE NET

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THE WEEK

■ After saying he would meet with enemies of our country, however irrational, Barack Obama headed straight to the Daily Kos convention.

■ The Democratic presidential candidates skipped the annual conference of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council, but trooped over to the one affiliated with dailykos.com and other left-wing blogs. Sen. Hillary Clinton, speaking of Iraq, said, "We have to keep the pressure on, and that is what we are trying to do." She was referring to the Bush administration, needless to say, and not al-Qaeda. She is the most hawkish of the Democratic candidates, and the one most resistant to the temptation to pander to the left-wing blogs. The party's stampede to the left continues.

PETER NEWCOMB/REUTERS

■ Barack Obama rattled his saber at Pakistan early this month. "There are terrorists holed up in those mountains who murdered 3,000 Americans. . . . If we have actionable intelligence about high-value terrorist targets and President Musharraf will not act, we will." Obama was looking for a way to push a liberal theme: Bush has mired us in Iraq, but we will fight the *real* battle, elsewhere. His critics, left and right, thought they had found a way to slap down the callow youth: Chris Dodd said he wouldn't discuss "specific military action[s]" in "the context of a political campaign," while the *New York Post* ran a child's version of a Pakistan invasion plan, complete with reversed *s*'s. The public education of Senator Obama continues. A welcome point, however, was made by Rudy Giuliani, among others: Nothing should be "off the table." He might have added that it is unwise to put too much on the table, either.

■ "Scott Thomas," the soldier who, as Baghdad diarist for *The New Republic*, reported gross and inhumane behavior committed by American troops in Iraq, has a surname: His name is Scott Thomas Beauchamp. That may be about all he has when the dust settles. Challenged on numerous improbabilities (can you hotrod over stray dogs in a Bradley Fighting Vehicle?) TNR did belated fact-checking and admitted that one anecdote—mocking a woman disfigured by an IED—happened, not at Beauchamp's Iraq base, but pre-deployment in Kuwait: not a minor change in a story meant to show the dehumanizing effects of war. Now the Army says its investigation has shown Beauchamp's stories to be false. More important than Beauchamp's lies and TNR's credulity is the vector of both. For four years America and its allies have been fighting people who used poison gas, tortured athletes, ran prisoners through paper shredders, bombed markets, slaughtered villages. They also swear up and down their hatred for the United States and their lust for one, two, many 9/11s. But ambitious writers and the editors who patronize them want stories on American atrocities. Even if they have to make them up.

■ During a recent candidate forum, Clinton and Obama both said that if there were a draft, which they oppose, young men and women alike should be conscripted to serve in the military. Although the candidates attempted to shift the subject to the importance of "national service," young men don't register with the Selective Service System in order to teach in inner-city schools. Should our national defense require a draft, registered young men would be called upon to serve involuntarily in the military's combat ranks. Democratic candidates for president think young women ought to be compelled to join them. Why? Women still cannot serve in most combat roles, for very good reasons, including the fact that they would be less likely than men to survive in them. (The top 5 percent of women perform at the male median in physical tests.) We have already taken some steps toward gender "equality," with the result that military women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are in greater danger than during any previous deployment. If Clinton and Obama want to go further, they should say so explicitly. Meanwhile, we look forward to hearing them explain to parents that their daughters should have to register for the draft.

■ The Democratic Congress is determined to send President Bush a bill expanding the federal program that provides health coverage to middle-class families. The program was originally designed to aid children whose parents made too much money to qualify for Medicaid but still had trouble getting insurance. Under the Democrats' proposals, the program would cover children from families making three times the poverty level—and in many cases the parents too. The program traps low-income workers in a classic "poverty trap": If they work hard to get a raise, their benefits fall so much that they could end up below where they started. But it is a great way for the Left to move toward socialized medicine. The federal government, along with state governments, has already done a lot to make the private health-insurance market dysfunctional. We would prefer it stopped doing that rather than expanded in response to its own mistakes. Which is another way of saying that President Bush should make good on his veto threat.

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The Week...

■ The FBI raided the home of Republican senator Ted Stevens in connection with a corruption case it is investigating in his state, Alaska. In 2000, Stevens ordered an extensive home-improvement project that nearly doubled the size of his house. Allegedly, the contractors who did the work were told to send the invoices first to VECO Corp., an oilfield-services company whose two top executives have pleaded guilty to bribing Alaska state legislators. Stevens appears to have paid the bills himself out of a separate account set up for the project, but investigators want to find out why a company known for its corrupt practices got a look at them first. Stevens's son, former Alaska senate president Ben Stevens, has not been charged in the corruption probe, but was named in the VECO execs' guilty pleas as someone who improperly accepted money from VECO in return for official acts. The whole thing stinks, and Stevens has done himself no favors by maintaining an unapologetic attitude about his status as one of Congress's worst porkers. If the FBI's search yields evidence of wrongdoing, Stevens should do what he promised to do in 2005 when Sen. Tom Coburn of Oklahoma threatened to defund his infamous "Bridge to Nowhere": resign.

■ The record will show that we are not reflexive defenders of attorney general Alberto Gonzales. If our advice had been taken a few months ago, he would be "former attorney general Alberto Gonzales" by now. But we like false allegations of perjury even less than we like Gonzales. Democrats are demanding that a special prosecutor be appointed to investigate whether Gonzales lied about the National Security

Justice League

I HAVE been advocating a "League of Democracies" for several years now. I'm hardly alone. The idea is old and has popped up from time to time for a century. The phrase, embarrassingly enough, was widely used during debates over the Treaty of Versailles. Recently, John McCain called for just such a league and, on August 6, Ivo Daalder and Robert Kagan argued for a "Concert of Democracies" in the *Washington Post*.

The basic argument is quite simple: America can surely go it alone when it has to, but going it alone is often more difficult than working with others. Indeed, the unpopularity and perceived illegitimacy of unilateralism makes the job harder simply because much of the world and most transnational elites see multilateralism as a good in and of itself. "Better to do wrong in a big group than do right alone" seems to be the mantra of the Davos and Turtle Bay Dithering and Dickering Societies. So, if working with others makes sense, why not work with nations that share your values and your interests? All the usual caveats notwithstanding, we usually call such nations "democracies."

This is not to say that our democratic allies are perfect or pliant. They're simply better than the alternative: the parliament of thugs known commonly as the United Nations. The place is a Yukon gold rush for kleptocratic scions of Third World autocracies, who plunder the world's wealth in the name of progress. It is a playground for global bureaucrats, who express their will-to-power by pushing for world government. And it treats totalitarian regimes as morally and politically indistinguishable from democratic ones. Indeed, the neo-Czarist regime of Russia and the entrepreneurial Communist regime of China have equal standing on the Security Council with the United States and Great Britain. It is a sign of God's sense of humor that France is the tie-breaker.

Now, opponents of a League of Democracies say that we can't leave the U.N. But this is a false choice. We could still hang a shingle at Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza while working with other multilateral institutions. We didn't bolt the U.N.—nor did we seek its approval—when Bill Clinton used NATO to pound the Serbs. Indeed, NATO is the best argument for a League of Democracies. In fact, all we would need to do is add Japan, India, South Korea, Australia, Taiwan, Israel, and a few other countries to its roster and that is what it would become.

Critics of this idea say that the U.S. should not be in the business of deciding who is and isn't a democracy. They say that we shouldn't be shunning outsiders but co-opting them. They say that only the U.N. has legitimacy and we need to work through it, not around it. Well, in brief: We already decide who is and isn't a democracy via common sense and rafts of State Department reports. A union of democracies would co-opt nations upward. Co-opting nations in the U.N. means getting a mailbox to send checks to.

Ultimately, I think a League of Democracies, in some form, is inevitable if for no other reason than that we'll have little choice but to find new strategic tools. China, Russia, and much of the Muslim world see the U.N. chiefly as a means of tripping up the U.S. Eventually, we're going to need to look elsewhere, and that's going to be to our friends—who are democracies.

—JONAH GOLDBERG

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THE WEEK...

Agency's surveillance of suspected terrorists in testimony before the Senate. That surveillance had gone on in secret during much of Bush's first term. Its scope was controversial within the administration, and following internal protests Bush narrowed it. The *New York Times* revealed the existence of the modified surveillance program, and Bush then confirmed it and dubbed it the "Terrorist Surveillance Program." Gonzales, in his testimony, said that *this* program had not sparked any internal dissent within the administration, although other measures had. What he said appears to have been true. The critics are claiming that Gonzales was being misleading, since the earlier, more expansive surveillance had sparked controversy. But a review of the transcript shows that Gonzales was trying to explain these distinctions as well as he could, given the way the Democrats—notably Chuck Schumer, who is now calling for an investigation—were badgering him on the witness stand. Recall that the year began with Democrats accusing the Justice Department of initiating baseless prosecutions of the administration's political opponents. No evidence has been shown that Justice initiated any such prosecutions. Now the Democrats are demanding that *their* opponents be prosecuted—and doing it more or less openly.

■ Has any case against a lower-court nominee been weaker or more disgraceful than the Democrats' case against Leslie H. Southwick, Bush's nominee for the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals? Even though he received the highest rating from the American Bar Association—hardly a friend of the administration—Southwick is being slandered as a racial bigot. The evidence? He joined an opinion affirming the decision of an administrative agency not to fire a public employee who used a racial slur—the N-word—on one occasion. Never mind that the decision simply applied an established standard of review; or that Southwick condemned the slur as something that "cannot be justified by any argument"; or, finally, that the state supreme court agreed that the employee should not be fired. Senate Republicans should muster the gumption to fight this vilification of an outstanding judge.

■ The collapse of the Interstate 35 W bridge in Minneapolis was the Garrison Keillor Katrina: a failure of infrastructure, now in the upper Midwest, that riveted America's attention. (Thankfully, the lack of an accompanying natural disaster held the death toll to single digits.) In a modern society thousands of people risk their lives daily: soldiers, cops, firemen, miners. Most motorists understand the actuarial risks of piloting one-ton metal vehicles at 65 mph. But we rightly expect roads and bridges (short of acts of God) to be safe. Infrastructure, if not a core function of government, has been close to the core for a long time (New York state began digging the Erie Canal in 1817). But the farther the state extends its reach, the less sure its touch. Alexander Hamilton wrote of "energy in the Executive." The prerequisite for that is focus, which also requires discipline from lawmakers and their constituents.

■ Between the Senate energy bill and the energy bill the House just passed, it's hard to say which is worse. It looked like the Senate bill's awfulness would be hard to surpass: It calls for a 40 percent increase in automobile fuel-efficiency standards that would make cars less safe and more expensive, and also for a costly expansion of the ethanol mandate. The House bill does not include either provision, but it has others just as bad. House Democrats amended it during a rare Saturday session to require that utilities generate 15 percent of their power using solar, wind, and other renewable-energy sources by 2020. Such *dirigisme* would increase electricity costs, especially in the South, where wind power has a poor track record. The bill raises taxes on oil and gas companies, which will almost certainly yield higher prices for the consumer. Finally, the bill authorizes individuals to sue government agencies for damages if those agencies don't meet arbitrary greenhouse-gas emissions targets. We can think of better ways to reduce government hot air, most of which involve Congress keeping its hands off the energy market.

■ "There is such a thing in politics," said Martin Van Buren (D., N.Y.), "as killing a man too dead." Eliot Spitzer (D., N.Y.) is learning that lesson. Spitzer, a headline-grabbing liberal attorney general, won the governorship last November with 69 percent of the vote. Lone obstacle to his political dominance was Joe Bruno, Republican state senate majority leader. Bruno is an old pork-barrel pol who last met a principle in the disco era. Not content to play on such themes, three Spitzer aides, including his communications director, asked the state police to compile records on Bruno's use of state aircraft, which they then fed, in distorted form, to an Albany newspaper (Spitzer's chief of staff was also in the loop). The new attorney general, Andrew Cuomo, reported their shenan-

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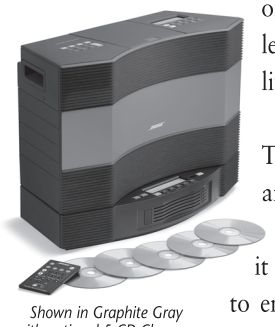

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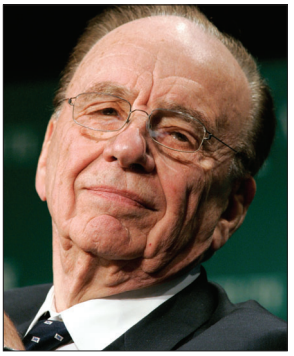
The Week...

igans, and now the Albany district attorney is investigating (Cuomo and the DA are both Democrats). Spitzer says he didn't know what was going on, which no pol watcher believes, but which better be true, if Spitzer should be asked to testify under oath.



■ With a $5 billion ring, Rupert Murdoch wed the *Wall Street Journal*. Every fan of lively journalism, and every conservative, wishes the happy couple well. The *Journal* is a profitable titan; still, the economics of newspapering are so grim that it needed an infusion of Murdoch's cash and savvy. If there is a future for newspapers in some synergy of television and the Internet, Murdoch will take the *Journal* there. Will he transform (or destroy) its content? Murdoch said, for laughs, that if the *Journal* got Page 3 girls (referring to the topless cuties of the British *Sun*) they would have MBAs. He also said, for more than laughs, that he would interfere as little as Arthur Sulzberger Jr. interferes with the *New York Times*: a significant remark, not least because it is wrong. No doubt Sulzberger interferes. But if he disappeared, the *Times* would be the same, because modern elite journalists are all the same. It takes a Bigfoot with Murdoch's shoe size to deflect the momentum of mainstream journalism one iota. Long may he, and his newest paper, wave.

■ What is being characterized as a "Saudi arms deal" is provoking opposition on both the right and the left. It is not, however, a stand-alone deal; it is part of a broad initiative to knit the Gulf states together with one another and with us against Iran. The region traditionally had two counterweights to Iran's influence: Saddam's Iraq and us. With Saddam gone and with our commitment to Iraq and the region in doubt, the Gulf states badly need bolstering, or they will begin to appease the Persian threat to the east. The administration's initiative plugs the Gulf states into U.S. air- and missile-defense systems, counter-proliferation efforts, and regional defense planning. It also sells the Saudis and the other Gulf states military hardware that will enhance our influence with them. We have no great affection for the Saudi monarchy, and wish the administration would do more to push it to end its Wahhabi evangelism and its hostility to the Iraqi government. But in a dangerous part of the world, we must always depend on a coalition of lesser evils, and the sale to the Saudis meets the basic Middle Eastern standard: better than the alternative.

■ The U.S. and India finally hammered out the details of their agreement to share nuclear technology. Critics of the deal charge that it is too generous—recklessly generous—to India. The U.S. will supply India with nuclear fuel for its reactors, and will allow India to reprocess this fuel. To the critics, this seems a double standard: How can America combat proliferation while making it easier for India, if it so chooses, to proliferate? The answer is that the character of the regime in question matters. India, though it has not signed the NPT, has never been a party to illicit transfers of nuclear technology. North Korea and Iran, both signatories of the NPT, have. (North Korea, confronted with its violations, resolved this contradiction by withdrawing from the pact.) Moreover, many of India's interests align with those of the U.S., particularly with regard to combating Islamic fundamentalism and counterbalancing the rise of China. It is the sort of ally we should want to have, and should want to help.

■ The inner thoughts of Gordon Brown, the recent successor in Downing Street to Tony Blair, are a wholly unknown quantity. In a peculiarly lugubrious voice, he delivers himself of abstract language on almost all subjects; his statements might mean anything or nothing. On foreign affairs, he has always been either silent or mystifyingly opaque. So when he went to Camp David, the media everywhere assumed that some insight must at last emerge. Surely he would use this important occasion to take his distance from Blair, whose pro-American eagerness was considered a liability? Wouldn't Britain announce a date for withdrawal from Iraq? Not a bit of it. The platitudes rolled out in those lugubrious tones, and nobody was any the wiser about intentions or plans, let alone a change of direction. President Bush was polite enough, or bewildered enough, to describe his visitor as "humorous."

■ A dreadful tale of squalor and injustice tells you all you need to know about Muammar Qaddafi and the way he runs Libya. Over 400 local children contracted AIDS, and some 50 of them have died. Admission that poor medicine was the cause would have been shaming, and so five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor were accused of deliberately infecting them. These six have spent over eight years in prison, and were sentenced to death. Under international pressure, Qaddafi commuted their sentences to life imprisonment to be served in Bulgaria. Whereupon Cécilia Sarkozy, wife of the newly elected French president, swooped into Libya and took away the imprisoned six in a presidential

Why Bush Smiles

Two lefties from Brookings opining
On Iraq last week in the Times
Were so optimistic, Pelosi
Appeared to be sucking on limes;
While Reid, whose demeanor already
Suggests an addiction to quince,
Scared visitors in from Nevada,
Who haven't been located since.

—W. H. von Dreele

HECTOR MATA/AFP

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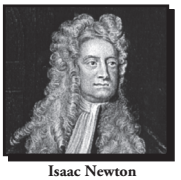
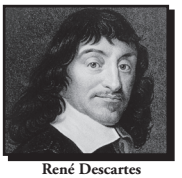
The Birth of the Modern Mind

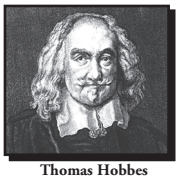
Learn how these great thinkers shaped the intellectual and political revolution of the Enlightenment

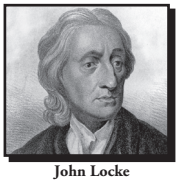
with brilliant lectures by Professor Alan Charles Kors of the University of Pennsylvania, editor-in-chief of the Oxford University Press *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*


Isaac Newton


René Descartes

Blaise Pascal


Thomas Hobbes


John Locke

David Hume

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As an educated person, you're aware that many of the basic concepts shaping our world are barely 200 years old. Modern science, technology, democratic government, natural rights, and even a general tendency to be open to innovation are a few examples. Our society and culture take them as givens, even while we continue to debate their meanings and implications.

In all likelihood, you have wondered about this conceptual architecture of our modern age. Where did these clusters of ideas come from? How are they related to one another, to ideas that came before, and to our problems today? How did they become so prominent so swiftly?

In **The Birth of the Modern Mind: The Intellectual History of the 17th and 18th Centuries,** Professor Alan Charles Kors makes clear that any search for answers to these questions must reckon with the revolution of the intellect that swept Europe between 1600 and 1800—a revolution whose lights and shadows are all around us still. Changing accustomed ways of thought like few things before or since, it sparked what he calls "perhaps the most profound transformation [ever] of European, if not human, life."

A World-Class Scholar

Professor Alan Charles Kors has lectured on these topics for nearly a third of a century at the University of Pennsylvania, where he has won two awards for distinguished teaching. He is currently the editor-in-chief of the multi-volume Oxford University Press *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment.* With his erudition and lecturing skills, he brings history to life in a way you'll enjoy.

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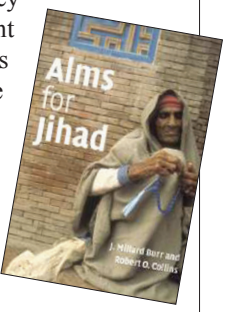
THE WEEK...

plane out to liberty and a pardon for them all in Bulgaria. The very next day, Sarkozy himself arrived in Libya to finalize a deal involving aid, contracts for anti-tank missiles and other weaponry, and cooperation in civilian nuclear power. That's the payoff for the squalor. Sarkozy happens to be vacationing at Wolfeboro in New Hampshire, and broke off to make a statement that the release of the six was in no way connected to the deal with Qaddafi. The French president may be new but he is no more believable than his predecessors.

■ Since Mao Tse-tung, back in the 1950s, succeeded in recreating the old Manchu empire, the Communist government of mainland China has had the problems colonial powers always have with disgruntled subject populations. These problems have been worst in Tibet, where the natural instinct to resist foreign occupation has been fortified by strong attachment to the national religion, a highly distinctive form of Buddhism. Tülkus, or reincarnations of the Buddha, are especially revered by Tibetans, who have developed elaborate rules and rituals for identifying these "living Buddhas." This is vexing to the Communists, who want no authority figure in any part of their empire to be appointed by anyone but themselves. They have accordingly issued an edict that from September 1 of this year, all tülkus not approved by the State Religious Affairs Department will be "illegal and invalid." This makes official a longstanding policy. When, in 1995, the exiled Dalai Lama anointed a six-year-old boy, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, as a senior tülku, the Communists kidnapped the boy and his family, who have not been seen since. How all this squares with Article 36 of China's constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion, we leave readers to decide.

■ The Eritrea–Ethiopia War of 1998–2000 generated many refugees, among them over 4,200 Kunamas, Eritrean pastoralists who took the wrong side in that war and now live in a camp across the border in north Ethiopia. The camp is milked for taxes and recruits by a local Eritrean rebel group. This group was naturally upset to hear that the Kunamas, all 4,200 of them, had been offered resettlement in the U.S. To forestall the threatened loss of money and manpower, the rebels set up a makeshift video parlor in the camp and played the old 1977 TV miniseries *Roots* to the refugees, omitting to tell them that the anti-slavery drama was historical. By the time resettlement officials arrived to begin formal procedures, they found a widespread belief that what awaited the Kunamas in America would be shackles, whipping posts, and the unwanted attentions of Chuck Connors. Only 700 of the camp residents—one in six—have taken up the resettlement offer. "We had people walking 50 kilometers [31 miles] to tell us they didn't want to go to America," marveled one U.N. refugee official. It could have been worse: They could have seen *Deliverance*.

■ Saudi billionaire Khalid bin Mahfouz sued Cambridge University Press for libel after it published a book last year that named Mahfouz as a sponsor of terror. The book, *Alms for Jihad*, is a careful study of the international system of Islamic charities that funnel money to al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. A fatwa it is not, but the press is still kowtowing to the mau-mauers. Cambridge settled out of court, agreed to pay substantial damages to Mahfouz, and stated publicly that "there is no truth whatsoever in these serious allegations" of his wrongdoing. (They must be forgetting that the U.S. Department of the Treasury has listed one of his charities as a front for al-Qaeda.) Worse still, they've agreed to pulp all unsold copies of the book, and even to write to hundreds of libraries asking that the book be withdrawn from the shelves for further pulping. The Saudis enjoy the light of literature; they just prefer that it come from a pyre.



■ "Ethnic studies" is of course a bogus academic discipline, its topics adequately covered, in any well-organized university, by the departments of anthropology, sociology, history, and linguistics. Even by the fraudulent standards of a bogus discipline, though, ethnic studies professor Ward Churchill of the University of Colorado was an egregious specimen. He was also foolish. In an essay published soon after 9/11, Churchill argued that, far from being innocent victims of an atrocity, workers at the World Trade Center were "a technocratic corps at the very heart of America's global financial empire . . . little Eichmanns." The essay became widely known in 2005, leading inquirers to scrutinize Churchill's life and work. Neither came out of the scrutiny well. Churchill's ancestry was not part-Indian, as he had claimed; his Vietnam War service was not as he had presented it; some of his writings and artwork were plagiarisms or imitations of others; some of his "historical research" was fabricated out of whole cloth. Churchill has now been fired by the university. If he had not drawn attention to himself with that stupid "little Eichmanns" essay, he would still have his professorship. That is the most depressing fact of all in this depressing case.

■ Chauncey Bailey, the editor of the *Oakland Post*, was killed in what police describe as an assassination. He had been investigating the shady finances of an establishment listed in the Oakland, Calif., phone book as Your Black Muslim Bakery. (It once was called merely Your Bakery—until the late Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad asked its owner, a black convert to Islam, to change his business's name. Thereafter, it sold companion tracts to the Koran next to its coconut carrot cakes.) Devaughndre Broussard, a handyman at the bakery who was arrested in a police raid at an adjoining property, is the apparent culprit: He confessed to the killing, telling detectives he considered himself "a good soldier" for silencing Bailey. During his editorship of the *Post*, which is marketed toward blacks in the Bay Area, Bailey did not refrain from placing blame, when deserved, on black community leaders. Indications are that those behind Your Black Muslim Bakery deserved just such opprobrium. Now, with blood on their hands, let them receive it.

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The Week...

■ After astronaut Lisa Nowak tried to kidnap her love rival earlier this year, NASA commissioned an independent review of astronaut health care. The review has revealed that on at least two occasions our astronauts went into space sufficiently intoxicated to draw the attention of flight surgeons and fellow crew members. One of the offending spacemen was headed for the international space station on a Russian craft, so that, given the well-known proclivities of Russians in this regard, he may only have intended a comradely gesture; the other episode has no apparent explanation. Given the shuttle's safety record, however—14 crew deaths in 118 flights—it's not hard to see the incentive to dull one's senses at launch time. Perhaps NASA should adopt the policy of the British army in World War I, when infantrymen preparing to go "over the top" from their trenches into enemy machine-gun fire were issued a stiff rum ration.

■ With their conspicuous pocket protectors, their too-short pants showing an expanse of white sock, their love of gadgets, and their *gaucherie* around girls, nerds are perhaps the most familiar of all the strange, wild tribes that inhabit the modern American high school. There is even a sort of nerd-pride movement, possibly inspired by the worldly success of *über*-nerd Bill Gates: The 1984 movie *Revenge of the Nerds* has generated three sequels. It is therefore not surprising to learn that nerdishness has attracted learned academic investigation. Linguist Mary Bucholtz of the University of California has been studying nerds for the past twelve years. Her conclusions, reported in the *New York Times*: It's all about race. Nerds, you see, are "hyperwhite." In fact, says the *Times* summary of her work, "by cultivating an identity perceived as white to the point of excess, nerds deny themselves the aura of normality that is usually one of the perks of being white." This must qualify as one of the most wrongheaded conclusions ever to emerge from the human sciences. Leaving aside the fact that there are, and always have been, black nerds, common observation suggests that the classic white nerd is in fact an endangered species, his place usurped by a new generation of East and South Asian nerds.

■ Break out the asterisks. Barry Bonds is the holder of major-league baseball's record for career home runs by an abuser of performance-enhancing drugs. Typically, baseball players do not radically increase their production at age 35, let alone grow into a new shoe and cap size. Bonds did all of that, apparently because he could not stand to see other steroid abusers eclipse what, until that point, had been his entirely natural excellence. It thus became possible for him to break a record Hank Aaron had established through an extraordinary consistency—a 20-year period of never hitting fewer than 20 homers in a season and never more than 47. Whatever number Bonds eventually settles on for the new career record will mark, not his considerable talent, but his infamy.

■ The death, at age 89, of the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman was greeted, by cineastes as well as theists, with shrugs. Bergman was quintessentially of his time—the existentialist Fifties, when he achieved cult status—and of an even earlier time: His roots were in the 19th-century theater of Ibsen and Strindberg, as were many of his themes: God; life in His absence; the war of the sexes. These concerns were easily parodied, by him first and foremost. Angst became mere anxiety; bad Woody Allen movies lurked around every corner. The reaction to the reaction will rediscover Bergman's early romances, and the beautiful actresses they celebrated, and his knack for nightmarish myths. The figure of Death in *The Seventh Seal*, which has been mocked a million times, rises above the laugh tracks. R.I.P.

■ "The West is born of Christianity, and the crisis of the West is that it isn't Christian anymore." Such was the judgment of Aaron Lustiger, who, as a Jew born to Polish immigrants living in Paris, was a first-hand witness to the ravages of the 20th century. During World War II, he was separated from his parents, and his mother perished at Auschwitz. While in hiding with a family in Orléans, he converted to Catholicism, and was baptized Jean-Marie. By his 20s, Jean-Marie had been ordained a priest, and he rose quickly through the hierarchy, being consecrated as bishop in 1979 and named a cardinal in 1983. As a Church leader, he championed Catholic-Jewish reconciliation. As France's highest-ranking prelate, he was a formidable public intellectual: He had spent 15 years as chaplain of the Sorbonne, and used radio and television to combat the prevailing French secularism. In 1995, he was honored with an appointment to the 40-strong Académie Française founded by his 17th-century predecessor Cardinal Richelieu. In a troubled time, Cardinal Lustiger believed the antidote to a grim modernity was a belief in God and His justice. He is dead, aged 80. R.I.P.

AT WAR

Summer in Baghdad

The Iraqi parliament's decision to adjourn until September 4 gives an easy sound bite to American advocates of withdrawal from Iraq. "Why should our soldiers fight and die in 120-degree heat," they will ask, "while Iraqi lawmakers go on vacation?"

But the truth is that the parliament can, on its own, do little or nothing to resolve Iraq's political impasse. Most of the business of governing happens outside of parliament, in negotiations among the major powerbrokers in Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's coalition. The parliament cut its scheduled summer recess short by a month, staying in session during July. But Maliki's government failed to reach compromise on legislation to divide Iraq's energy resources, increase Sunni representation, and achieve other so-called benchmarks. As a result, the parliament has had little to do.

It would have had even less to do in August, for the government is more fractious than ever. Its largest Sunni bloc—the Iraq Accordance Front—recently resigned its six posts in the

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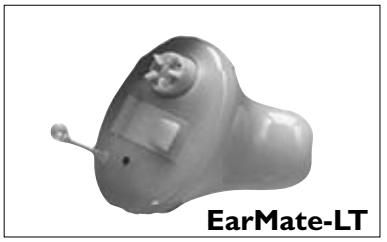
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cabinet (though it retains its seats in parliament). Five Sunni ministers loyal to former Iraqi prime minister Ayad Allawi quickly followed suit. The resigned ministers argue that Maliki has not adequately met their demands to disband Shiite militias and allow greater Sunni political involvement. Their decision to quit the government is a real blow, and will be taken by much of the American political class as further justification for U.S. withdrawal.

But that would be the wrong inference to draw. Even as Iraq's politicians bicker, its soldiers work with ours to create conditions on the ground from which true reconciliation may follow. Sunni tribes have begun to ally themselves with us, and with the Iraqi government, against al-Qaeda. The importance of this realignment is hard to overstate. Though still fragile, it has the potential to create what Maliki has not, an Iraq whose democratic government enjoys Sunni loyalty. Yet the American political debate refuses to take account of this change. As liberal hawks Michael O'Hanlon and Kenneth Pollack argued in an eye-opening *New York Times* op-ed, that debate has become detached from new realities in Iraq.

Reconciliation between the Sunnis and the Shiites is crucial. But it was not going to happen in the next two months, whether or not the Sunni ministers resigned, and whether or not the Iraqi parliament stayed in session. U.S. ambassador Ryan Crocker will spend August trying to nudge Iraqi politicians toward compromise. Success on that front would give him and Gen. David Petraeus more good news to report to Congress in September. But that report has taken on an extravagant and unjustified importance in Washington: It is an arbitrary deadline set by U.S. politicians, yet it has come to be seen as a final test for Iraq. This makes sense only for Democrats hell-bent on leaving no matter what, and for nervous Republicans who want a soft exit.

What matters is that we are beginning to see the fruits of a sound counterinsurgency strategy. Instead of ignoring our gains, debate should focus on how to consolidate them.

AT WAR II

FISA Fumbles

THE right thing it is not, but the Democratic Congress has done a barely adequate thing, by temporarily acknowledging the executive branch's authority to monitor international communications for the purpose of gathering foreign intelligence.

This acknowledgment should not have been controversial. The single most important task of any president is to protect the United States from external threats. To this purpose, presidents have for decades deployed the U.S. intelligence services—in particular, the CIA and the NSA—to intercept international communications.

That task has never been more vital than it is today, when transnational terror networks, seeking access to weapons of enormous power, have killed nearly 3,000 Americans and vow to increase the death toll. Yet our defense is hindered by an improvident and outdated legislative scheme, the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. FISA was an overreaction to Nixon-era abuses, which included employing the CIA to conduct domestic spying on the administration's political enemies. FISA created a federal court to make sure there is probable cause to believe that a target is an "agent of a foreign power" before okaying surveillance.

FISA is of dubious constitutionality. Foreign-intelligence collection is a plenary executive responsibility that judges are neither constitutionally authorized nor competent to oversee. Further, most of the targets of such surveillance are "non-U.S. persons" (a technical term meaning neither American citizens nor permanent resident aliens). "Probable cause" is a standard borrowed from domestic law enforcement, where it protects the privacy rights of American citizens. Most non-Americans, and especially aliens situated overseas, have no constitutional right to privacy from monitoring by U.S. intelligence agencies.

The Democrats have finally caved and enacted FISA reform, but not nearly enough of it.

Even in its anti-executive zealotry, the Congress that passed FISA for Jimmy Carter's signature understood this. Its provisions were carefully drafted so that foreign-to-foreign communications—say, a terrorist in Peshawar, Pakistan, calling a terrorist in Kabul, Afghanistan—would not come under the act. In those days, such contacts were deemed "radio communications" because they were monitored by NSA satellites. But the technological revolution of the following quarter-century rendered this focus on the type of communication, rather than the target, antiquated. Foreign-to-foreign communications now travel in diffuse packets of digital data through sophisticated networks, which route them not via the shortest route but via the least-congested terminals. Because American networks are the system's best, a Peshawar-to-Kabul phone call or e-mail may pass through the United States. So the very foreign communications Congress took pains to exclude from FISA's purview were swept into it.

And that is where we are today. According to a ruling disclosed by House minority leader John Boehner, the FISA court has suggested that, absent judicial authorization, the NSA may not monitor even a foreign-to-foreign communication if it has passed through U.S. networks.

Months ago, the administration proposed a legislative fix for this problem. But the Democrats, eager to please their anti-war base, refused to take up the measure until the eleventh hour. They have finally caved and enacted FISA reform, but not nearly enough of it: Their bill does not address the fundamental conceptual flaws of the FISA regime, and, although it allows the NSA to intercept foreign-to-foreign calls, it does so only for now, requiring a review after six months.

The public may have soured on the Iraq War and on Republicans, but we doubt very much that it wants to make it hard to monitor terrorists' conversations. The Democrats are overreaching here, and Republicans should take every opportunity between now and the next election to draw attention to it.

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■ POLITICS ■

Sinking in the West

Ted Stevens's last hurrah?

DAVID FREDDOSO

If Republican senator Ted Stevens is worried about the federal investigation that recently led to a joint IRS and FBI raid on his Girdwood, Alaska, home, he's not really showing it. At a moment when a lesser man would be keeping his head down, Stevens hasn't changed his style at all.

Even after he knew federal investigators were scrutinizing his earmarks for the Alaska SeaLife Center in Seward, the senator blithely tagged another $5.2 million for the center in the Senate's 2008 appropriations. Just after the raid on his home, he told a group of Republican senators that he might put a hold on the Senate lobbying and ethics bill (days later, it passed the Senate easily). Stevens tries to ease the trepidation of his staffers by telling them that the Feds are making "a mountain out of a molehill." To his colleagues, he says, "Stay with me."

The problem Republicans should have with this line is that they have heard it before. It came from the mouths of two former GOP congressmen now sitting in prison, Duke Cunningham and Bob Ney. As Stevens approaches the race for his eighth term in 2008, Alaska Republicans may want to make sure someone else is warming up in the bullpen.

The charges against Stevens are serious. Bill Allen, an executive of the oil-pipeline-service firm VECO, pleaded guilty earlier this year to bribing Alaska state legislators. He and an associate may have paid for more than $100,000 of work on Stevens's home. A paper trail indicates that one of Stevens's aides, who is now cooperating with the government, acted as the senator's private bookkeeper without reporting any compensation—in other words, she may have been working on the taxpayer's dime. There is indisputable evidence that one of Stevens's top aides received a sweetheart buyout on an asbestos- and lead-laden property in Seward, thanks to an earmark designated by his boss. Then there's the deal made by two of Stevens's business partners, who bought a piece of property and flipped it to the federal government one year later for twice as much—again, all possible because of a Stevens earmark.

Stevens's 38 years in office have made him one of the Senate's top dogs. But the respect he commands in Washington is nothing compared with the adulation he receives back home. In Alaska, he is revered as the state's chief diplomat and statesman. When his plane lands in Anchorage, it does so at an airport named after him. In 2003, Gov. Frank Murkowski declared Stevens's 80th birthday a state holiday—"Senator Ted Stevens Appreciation Day."

"You have to understand that Alaska is what it is today because of Ted Stevens," says one state official speaking from Anchorage. "He's pumped so much money into the state—billions of dollars."

Only the second man to hold the Senate seat he occupies, Stevens is the longest-serving GOP senator. He has earned a reputation as one of his chamber's most colorful characters. A former chairman of the powerful Appropriations Committee, he is famous for wearing an Incredible Hulk tie during the appropriations season—his humorous way of reminding lawmakers to think twice before crossing him.

And it is indeed unwise to cross him. Stevens's politics have always been moderate (his American Conservative Union lifetime rating is 64.5). But his passion for pork is extreme. Nothing triggers Stevens's famous temper like an attack on Alaska's stream of government fund-

ROMAN GENN

Mr. Freddoso is a National Review Online staff reporter.

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ing. He erupted in rage when Sen. Tom Coburn (R., Okla.) tried to redirect funding toward hurricane-struck New Orleans after it was earmarked for two questionable bridge projects in Alaska.

It is a tribute to the seniority and skill of Stevens (and of Alaska's long-serving Republican congressman Don Young) that the federal government spent $13,000 in Alaska for every man, woman, and child living there in 2004—more than in any other state, according to the nonpartisan Tax Foundation. Alaskans receive $1.87 of federal-government spending for every dollar they pay in federal taxes.

The question is whether Stevens has become a bit too skillful, using his position to enrich himself and others close to him. He has offered a carefully worded explanation of his home renovation, saying on July 17 that he and his wife "paid every bill that was given to us. Every bill that was sent to us has been paid, personally, with our own money, and that's all there is to it. It's our own money." That statement of course prompts the still-unanswered question of whether any bills were *not* sent to the senator (and went instead to someone else, such as VECO CEO Bill Allen). Stevens's office did not reply to inquiries from NATIONAL REVIEW.

The question is whether Ted Stevens has become a bit too skillful, using his position to enrich himself and others close to him.

And then there are the charges involving federal earmarks. In these cases, corruption really is in the eye of the beholder. John Stanton of *Roll Call* reported recently on just two examples from Alaska. In 2004, when Stevens earmarked money for the National Archives and Records Administration to buy a facility in Anchorage, his business partners Jonathan Rubini and Leonard Hyde happened to have just the property the Archives needed. Coincidentally, they had recently acquired it.

Stanton's second example also involves property. Is it a problem that staff, family, and friends of all three members of Alaska's congressional delegation—Stevens, Young (also under investigation for his ties to VECO), and Republican senator Lisa Murkowski—happen to own (and in many cases recently bought) land in Knik Arm, an isolated part of Alaska? Property values there could explode if a new bridge is built to connect it to Anchorage. As it happens, Young earmarked funds for a new bridge (which is even named after him) in the transportation bill passed by the last Congress.

Such arrangements are ethically dubious, yet in Congress it's hard to draw the line between a fortunate investment and an insider trade. If it were illegal for people to profit from their relationships with lawmakers, many more members of the House and Senate would be under investigation right now.

Congressional earmarks usually go to the well-connected, and Stevens's earmarks are no exception. Since 2003, he has secured $25.4 million for the SeaLife Center in Seward. A significant portion of that money was quietly added in House-Senate conference committees, and thus given little or no public scrutiny during congressional debate on spending bills. One such earmark was added to the conference report on the 2006 interior-appropriations bill. The earmark redirected money from Seward's waterfront-redevelopment project to SeaLife so that it could purchase a property from former Stevens aide Trevor McCabe for $558,000. The federal government had previously refused to pay McCabe's asking price for this property, which the Anchorage *Daily News* called "a brick-red single-story building riddled with lead and asbestos."

McCabe has already parlayed his former job in Stevens's office into a new role as an independent lobbyist for the fishing industry, taking four clients for an estimated $80,000 in just six months. He and his wife also bought property on Knik Arm in 2002, and are nicely positioned to profit from the bridge earmark. And McCabe has a separate arrangement, *Roll Call* reports, to give boat tours for the SeaLife Center through a company owned by Stevens's son, Ben, who is himself under investigation for taking bribes from VECO executives.

In Seward, as in Washington, the coincidences never seem to end. **NR**

■ **PUBLIC POLICY**

A Doctor, But Whose?

Diagnosing the disorder in the surgeon general's office

YUVAL LEVIN

THIS has been a summer of surgeon-general headaches for the Bush administration. In July, former surgeon general Richard Carmona, who served from 2002 to 2006, appeared before a congressional committee to criticize his former employers, claiming he had been muzzled for political reasons.

"The reality is that the nation's doctor has been marginalized and relegated to a position with no independent budget, and with supervisors who are political appointees with partisan agendas," Carmona, himself a political appointee, told the committee. His specific claims ranged from the benign (that his speeches, like those of all political appointees, were put through a staff-review process) to the peculiar (that he was invited to meetings about global warming) to the utterly implausible (that he was told not to participate in a Special Olympics event because of the Kennedy family's role in the project). But all were music to the ears of Rep. Henry Waxman (D., Calif.), chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. Carmona's allegations doubtlessly will resurface whenever the question of Republicans and science re-emerges in the coming years.

Meanwhile, the administration's new nominee for surgeon general, James Holsinger, has managed to upset both liberals and conservatives. A paper he wrote for the United Methodist Church in 1991, in which he argued that homosexuality is unhealthy, has drawn the ire of Democratic senators; and his support for human cloning for biomedical research has angered some Republicans.

The Bush administration has not been

Mr. Levin is a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a senior editor of *The New Atlantis* magazine.

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The Deadly Threat of a Nuclear-Armed Iran

What can the world, what can the USA, what can Israel do about it?

Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has declared publicly – not once, but repeatedly – that Israel must be "wiped off the map." That effort, the destruction of Israel, seems to be the main goal of Iranian policy. When Iranian missiles are paraded through the streets of Tehran, the destination "to Jerusalem" is clearly stenciled on them.

What are the facts?

A death wish for Israel. Ahmadinejad and the ayatollah who is the "supreme leader" have publicly mused that one or two nuclear bombs would obliterate Israel, but that, though it would cause devastating damage and millions of casualties, Iran would survive Israel's retaliatory attack. Iran is a huge country, with about 60 million inhabitants, so they are probably correct. And who can doubt that those religious fanatics would not hesitate to allow the destruction of much of their country and to sacrifice a third or even one-half of their population in order to eliminate the hated Jewish state. When our country was entangled with the Soviet Union in the bitter 40-year long "cold war," with both sides having sufficient nuclear weapons to destroy the opponent's country and its people, things were kept in place by MAD – Mutually Assured Destruction. However "evil" the leaders of the Soviet Union (the "Evil Empire") may have been, there was one great consolation and assurance: They were not crazy. But the Iranians and other Muslims are crazies, as we understand the concept. Because they take instructions directly from Allah, who tells them to kill the Jews and other infidels, whatever the cost.

> "An attack on the Iranian nuclear installations would fall under the heading of "anticipatory self-defense," recognized and sanctioned by international law and by common sense."

Israel has no problem with Iran. They share no borders and have no territorial dispute. In fact, they face common Arab enemies and should be natural allies, as they indeed were under the Shah. Iran's death wish for Israel is based entirely on religious fanaticism. In contrast even to the intractable North Koreans, the determination of the Iranians is immutable. It cannot be changed by persuasion, by diplomacy, by sanctions or by threats.

Once Iran is in possession of nuclear weapons, it will not only be a deadly danger to Israel, but to all of the Middle East and to virtually all of Europe. The flow of oil from the Middle East, the lifeblood of the industrialized world, would be totally under its control and so would be the economies of all nations of the world, very much including the United States.

What is to be done? In 1981, then prime minister of Israel Menachem Begin, being aware of Iraq's nuclear ambitions and looming realization of those ambitions, decided that its nuclear reactor at Osiraq had to be destroyed. The IAF (Israeli Air Force) accomplished that in a daring and unprecedented raid. Iraq's nuclear capability was eliminated in one stroke, never to rise up again. Israel had done the world an enormous service. Had it not been for Israel's decisive action, the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait and, without question, also of Saudi Arabia and its enormous oil fields, and, for that matter, of Iran, could not have been prevented. Saddam Hussein would have been the ruler of the world.

The solution to the deadly threat that Iran poses to the world is obvious. Of course, diplomacy and persuasion, threats and promises, sticks and carrots – every possible means short of military action – should be used until it becomes clear even to the most obdurate that nothing can deviate Iran from its chosen path of becoming a nuclear power and to dominate the Middle East.

There is reason to believe that the people of Iran, especially the young people, oppose the oppressive and theocratic regime of their country and are hostile to the mullahs who control everything. But the government has the tools of power firmly in its hands. It controls the instruments of coercion – it can kill people and it controls the oil money. While it would be most desirable and in the interest of the world to be able to foment an overthrow of the Iranian regime, that is an unrealistic and unattainable prospect.

Regrettably, there is only one solution to the terrible dilemma confronting the world, the unacceptable danger of a nuclear-armed Iran. The terror, the destruction and the 60 million dead of World War II could have been prevented at several times during the Nazi regime. But the Allied powers, under the leadership of Britain's prime minister Neville Chamberlain, opted for appeasement and for "peace in our time." We cannot afford to make that same mistake again. The world must give Iran an ultimatum: Desist immediately from the development of nuclear weapons; if you do not, we shall destroy the facilities that produce them. There still is a window of opportunity to do that. That window may close very soon. But who would do the job? The United States would be the obvious choice. But if the United States were in accord, Israel could do it, just as it did the job in 1981 in destroying Iraq's nuclear potential once and for all.

An attack on the Iranian nuclear installations would fall under the heading of "anticipatory self-defense," recognized and sanctioned by international law and by common sense. Nobody really knows for sure how far Iran is from reaching its goal — six months. six years? The experts disagree. But if Iran is not stopped now, it may well be too late not very long from now.

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unique in its surgeon-general troubles. In the Clinton years, Joycelyn Elders got into hot water for recommending masturbation as a public-health measure, and her successor David Satcher sought to promote needle exchange over drug-treatment programs, but was held back by his superiors in the Department of Health and Human Services.

The theatrics and hand-wringing surrounding these scandals have tended to avoid a simple question: What is the surgeon general's purpose and role? Carmona's description of the job as "the nation's doctor" is a very common one, but it hardly offers an answer: What does a "nation's doctor" do?

When the post was created in 1871, the surgeon general was head of the Marine Hospital Service, which cared for American merchant sailors. Under the first surgeon general, John Maynard Woodworth, the MHS took the form of a uniformed pseudo-military service, and was assigned some crucial public-health responsibilities, most notably the maintenance of quarantines. In 1889, the larger U.S. Public Health Service was created, and the surgeon general was made its head. The MHS, meanwhile, was folded into the PHS and became its Commissioned Corps, a uniformed service assigned to help prevent the spread of disease and bring medical care to areas in need. Today, it continues to perform these functions through its roughly 6,000 doctors, nurses, pharmacists, engineers, and other uniformed officers.

The surgeon general's duties, in short, fit the grandeur of his title. But since 1953, when another reorganization created the cabinet-level office now known as the Department of Health and Human Services, the surgeon general's duties have gradually contracted. In 1968, the responsibility for running the PHS was moved to the assistant secretary for health, to whom the surgeon general now reports.

With very few practical administrative responsibilities, the surgeon general's office has become increasingly symbolic. Its website lists the following as first among the surgeon general's duties:

> To protect and advance the health of the Nation through educating the public; advocating for effective disease prevention and health promotion programs and activities; and, provide a highly recognized symbol of national commitment to protecting and improving the public's health.

Today's surgeon general, in other words, is a public-health spokesman and brand. But a spokesman for whom? The controversy over supposed political control of the office suggests that many in the Left do not think the surgeon general should speak for the president who appointed him, but rather for the science of public health.

This field, however, has become radically politicized over the past several decades, serving on one hand as a Trojan horse for some of the most extreme cultural theories of the Left, and on the other as an excuse for paternalistic restrictions on individual behavior. Some of the surgeons general in Democratic administrations, such Elders and Satcher, have been most concerned to advance the Left's cultural agenda, but most, including Carmona, have exemplified the paternalistic tendency.

The surgeon general today is little more than a finger-wagging preacher calling on the public to give up unhealthy habits. Earlier this year, the surgeon general's office released a report on teen drinking, and last year Carmona released one on second-hand smoke—the latest in a long line of reports on tobacco use, which has been the favorite subject of assorted surgeons general since the 1960s. In recent years, the office has published a report on the role of culture, race, and ethnicity in mental health, and another on youth violence—neither of them a public-health issue under any but the broadest definition.

With very few practical administrative responsibilities, the surgeon general's office has become increasingly symbolic.

These reports—which are generally just compilations of government statistics produced not by the surgeon general or his staff, but by bureaucrats in other agencies—routinely fall into exaggeration and excess. In 2006, Carmona described obesity in America as "a terror within" comparable to Islamic fundamentalism, and claimed it takes the lives of almost half a million Americans a year—a figure the Centers for Disease Control later had to acknowledge was unfounded.

The tone of surgeon-general reports makes for a telling case study in the way health has usurped the place of virtue in America's public vocabulary. Public health is the only remaining language in which to speak of vice—an old-fashioned word that once would have been the obvious way to refer to, say, smoking and drinking. The self-righteousness that colors the crusade against obesity, smoking, and other modern sins is as near as the Left gets to religion, and the surgeon general fills the role of oracle.

That is precisely why Democrats are so worked up about the latest surgeon-general troubles. Responding to concerns about political control of the office, Sen. Ted Kennedy introduced a bill to give the surgeon general an independent budget and to constrain the president's authority to select surgeons general by forcing him to pick from a short list prepared by the Institute of Medicine, an arm of

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the National Academy of Sciences.

This approach is exactly backward. The surgeon general should be more, not less, integrated into the administration The Kennedy bill, with its ideal of scientific independence from the petty concerns of democracy, is a recipe for unrestricted public-health activism in the name of the executive branch, but without its approval or control. As the office is currently constituted, the surgeon general simply does not serve a legitimate public purpose. In Republican administrations, it is little more than a source of internal strife; in Democratic ones, it is an arm of the radical Left. Far from keeping politics out of science, the office has relentlessly politicized public health, and has done remarkably little of practical use. The Kennedy bill would only make matters worse.

The Bush administration, or its successor, has two good options for reform. It could eliminate the office outright, and absorb its few practical responsibilities into existing public-health agencies, especially the Centers for Disease Control. Or, as is more likely given the political cost of doing away with the surgeon general's "brand," the assistant secretary for health, who is already charged with overseeing all those public-health agencies, could simply assume the title of surgeon general, endowing the post with serious responsibilities and leaving little time for mischief.

In that case, the surgeon general would be a senior political appointee, more closely linked to the aims and priorities of the president. His reconstituted office would have a serious role in running the Department of Health and Human Services and its public-health agencies, rather than being a publicity gambit founded on outbursts and exaggerations. Such a surgeon general could thus truly speak for the country's public-health bureaucracy and serve as a symbol of the government's efforts to prevent the spread of disease. But he would not need to be a voice for ideological alarmism or political extremism.

The surgeon general is not the nation's doctor. Doctors examine and heal, advise and consult. The surgeon general just preaches. His gospel, the good news of public health, does not benefit from reckless activism. And his title and status, in their current form, lead only to confusion about the proper (and properly limited) role of science in governing a democracy. **NR**

■ **PUBLIC POLICY II**

Risky Operation

Socialized medicine comes at a cost

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

EARLY in August, both houses of Congress voted by clear majorities (and the Senate by a bipartisan one) to extend for another five years the so-called State Children's Health Insurance Program (or S-CHIP), which had been scheduled to expire this September. This program had originally granted free health insurance to the children of "poor working families"—defined as those earning up to 200 percent of the poverty level.

As well as extending S-CHIP's life, however, the House bill expanded the definition of poor working families to include those earning up to 400 percent of the poverty level. Thus, children in families where the annual income is as high as $82,000 will become eligible for free health insurance. Since an estimated 77 percent of children living between 200 and 300 percent of the poverty level—and 89 percent of those between 300 and 400 percent—already have private health insurance, this extension will push them from private into state health insurance. It will, in a word, "socialize" their health insurance. According to the non-partisan General Accounting Office, 2 million Americans will go from private to state insurance—not all of them "children" as conventionally understood. The rules in 14 states allow children as old as 25 to enroll in S-CHIP. That kind of thing could give "bracket creep" a bad name.

This is a very appealing prospect for the Left. Liberals believe in universal health insurance for both idealistic and self-interested reasons. They genuinely believe it will provide everyone, especially the poor, with both good health care and a sense of "health security"—of which the second is politically the more important. A recent poll by the liberal Democracy Corps found that "knowing I will always have health-care coverage" mattered significantly more to voters than quality of care, cost, or choice of physician. As the pollsters Anna Greenberg, David Walker, Stanley Greenberg, and James Carville commented: "A key selling point to a universal system is not simply covering the 47 million uninsured Americans . . . but also that a universal system means health care can never be taken away from average families." Once socialized medicine arrives, it is irreversible.

In addition to moving 15 percent of Gross Domestic Product permanently into the control of government, moreover, universal health insurance would also strengthen the Left politically. As the left-wing writer Rick Perlstein recently exulted over the Democrats' defense of an unreformed Social Security system: "These programs make life in America fundamentally better. . . . These gooses [*sic*], Social Security, Medicare, lay golden eggs. They manufacture Democrats." Very simply, entitlements create large client constituencies. Because the Democrats are reasonably seen as their creators and defenders, the entitlements become a reason for voting Democratic. Other things being equal, they tilt the political system in the direction of Democrats.

All this is true. But it is not the sole political truth about universal health insurance. What such calculations omit is the political effect of how socialized medicine works in practice.

All health-care systems aim to achieve three things: (a) cost control, (b) universal access, and (c) provision of the full range of medical services. Alas, only two of these can be achieved simultaneously by any system. Pick (b) and (c), for instance, and costs will spiral out of control. But all three can at least be reconciled—automatically and efficiently—in a free-market health system by the price mechanism. Once demand for health care is no longer limited by price, however, it will rise indefinitely until it consumes the entire national income. Nations with universal health systems in effect deny this. They promise their citizens good-quality health care free at the point of consumption. How do they keep their promise?

Britain adopted its National Health Service in 1948. The NHS was not invented de novo; it knitted together existing charitable, voluntary, local, and commer-

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cial medical services. It was immensely popular less because it provided "free" health care for the poor (who already enjoyed that) than because it relieved the middle class of "health insecurity." It has remained popular ever since, attaining an almost religious status in the minds of respectable Britons, equal or superior to that of the monarchy.

It also remained relatively uncontroversial for more than two decades. There was a dull accounting reason for this. For the first 14 years of its existence, the NHS kept its promise of free, quality health care by consuming capital. Until the first hospital building program was launched in 1962, socialized medicine lived off the capital invested in hospitals and clinics by philanthropic Victorian capitalists. Money that should have gone into capital investment went instead into current health spending. Rising demand for health care was satisfied.

Once that expedient was exhausted, however, and because they were committed to universal access, successive health ministers had to juggle cost control and the provision of full medical services. Cost control won. For at least another decade, ministers kept the NHS going by relying on various forms of informal rationing by clinicians. One overworked doctor in the 1960s told me that he rationed care by assuming that any first-time patient was healthy; only if the patient returned for a second visit would he seriously examine his symptoms. Many told elderly patients with conditions that were expensive to treat that "nothing could be done." They were assisted in that by another Victorian legacy: the deference of polite English people to professional opinion. A third expedient was to underpay doctors and nurses, accepting that they would emigrate to Australia and the U.S., to be replaced by doctors from India and Africa. (Doctors moonlighting as terrorists is a recent development unconnected to the NHS's wider problems.)

By these expedients U.K. spending on health care was a mere 6 percent of GDP at the start of the 1980s—possibly the lowest of advanced industrial countries. At that point several crises occurred at once: The decaying infrastructure of health care became a scandal; deference collapsed, both generally and, because AIDS affected many socially confident people, towards the medical profession in particular; and the knowledge of rationing became widespread. All these led to fierce criticism not of the Health Service itself—that was invariably praised as "the envy of the world"—but of whatever government happened to be presiding over it.

Here was where Rick Perlstein's political calculation proved its worth. Though Mrs. Thatcher was massively expanding government spending on health care—it rose 40 percent in her first two terms before her 1987 health-reform package—she was denounced for starving the NHS. Though false, this was credible: The Tories were genuinely more skeptical of the value of socialized medicine and Labour was seen as its progenitor. The alternative to blaming Mrs. Thatcher was to blame the NHS itself—and that was unthinkable. She survived that bullet, but eventually it found its mark. In 1997 Tony Blair was elected on a program that included a large increase in health spending as a response to Tory "neglect."

Blair and his Chancellor, Gordon Brown, poured money into the NHS. They also attempted some desultory and ineffective reforms. But they were up against the political reality that the NHS inevitably produces long waiting times for operations and the withholding of expensive drugs—and that these failings are equally inevitably blamed on the government.

Ten years later, spending on the NHS has doubled in real terms. An ambitious program of "targets"—e.g., reductions in waiting times for operations—has been launched. Such targets are a formal acknowledgment of rationing and poor-quality service, but are also frequently not met. Patients are kept waiting for many months for outpatient appointments and in-hospital treatment and, in some cases, denied life-saving drugs on the grounds of expense. It is the Labour government that is now blamed for these failings, the Tories who preach their fidelity to the ideal of socialized medicine, and the NHS that soars, fuelled by its own inherent shortcomings.

For the moment, what Digby Anderson calls the "spell" cast by Britain's version of socialized medicine remains politically intact. But it has ceased to work its magic for the benefit of the Left. And its internal contradictions can only get worse.

Coming soon to a district near you. **NR**

■ BRITAIN

Interesting People, Yes

. . . but, sadly, not absorbing

THEODORE DALRYMPLE

APRIL is the cruellest month, and "Mohammed" is the commonest name, or soon will be, in England. The news that, by the end of the year, "Mohammed" will be the name given to more male babies in England than "John" has a symbolic significance, even if it is only the logical result of a demographic trend that has been clear for some time now.

Complacency is often an attempt to fight back panic, and those who want to see in the news nothing to be alarmed about have various arguments to console them. Not every Moslem is a fanatic, far from it, and many just want a quiet life like everyone else; besides, such fanatics as there are among them are disunited among themselves, and devote as much or more of their energies to squabbling with one another, as various Marxist sects once did, as to their real work of subversion and Islamization.

Islamists, say the complacent, cannot even agree among themselves whether it is *halal* or *haram* to vote in elections, let alone about anything else. Some say that Islam is quintessentially democratic because the ummah is an association of equals, and the democratic system can in any case be used to pursue Islamic goals; others that democracy is anti-Islamic above all systems, because sovereignty belongs to God and not to man, and any dealings with it other than those of violent opposition are inherently corrupt. People who think the latter claim also to know exactly what God wants us to do, directly

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from their own reading of the Koran, and so anyone who disagrees with them in the slightest detail is automatically a heretic, motivated by the worst, that is to say un-Islamic, motives. This makes Islamism inherently fractious and fragile from the organizational point of view: It is a good recipe for making trouble, perhaps, but not for seizing power.

Many Moslems, say the complacent, are well integrated. They go to work like everyone else, do a good or a bad job, and even throw up local heroes. A young boxer called Amir Khan, for example, who won a silver medal at the Olympics at the age of 17 and then turned professional, and will one day probably be world champion, goes into the ring wrapped in the Union Jack, which he kisses before his fights. His town, Bolton, is proud of him, and he has a vociferous following among Bolton's non-Moslems. Here is a hopeful sign, then, and there are thousands of other, smaller ones each day. So really there is nothing to worry about.

Another consolation for those in search of good reasons to be complacent is that much of what is now said about the Moslems has been said about previous immigrant groups. Jewish immigrants from czarist Russia crowded into the East End of London (where they have now been comprehensively replaced by the Bangladeshis), and their foreign ways, thought at the time to be unassimilable to British culture, gave rise to fears of swamping, and even the Jews already established in the country campaigned to limit further Jewish immigration in order to preserve their own privileged position. Within a generation, the supposedly unassimilable immigrants had made a contribution to national life completely out of proportion to their numbers, and went from poverty to wealth and influence.

When Idi Amin expelled the Indians from Uganda in the 1970s, and they were reluctantly accepted into Britain because of previous obligations to them (they had been given British passports at Ugandan independence), there was widespread muttering about their unassimilability. As a group, however, they have been a triumphant success, economically and educationally, though many of them landed with no more than $10 in their pockets.

More recently, half a million Poles have moved to Britain since it opened its borders to them. This has produced the extraordinary result of Indian shops with signs in Polish advertising Polish delicacies. But there is no murmuring against the Poles—if anything, sentiment is strongly pro-Polish, for they work well, demand nothing, are more polite than the locals, and cause no problems. Everyone wants Poles working for him.

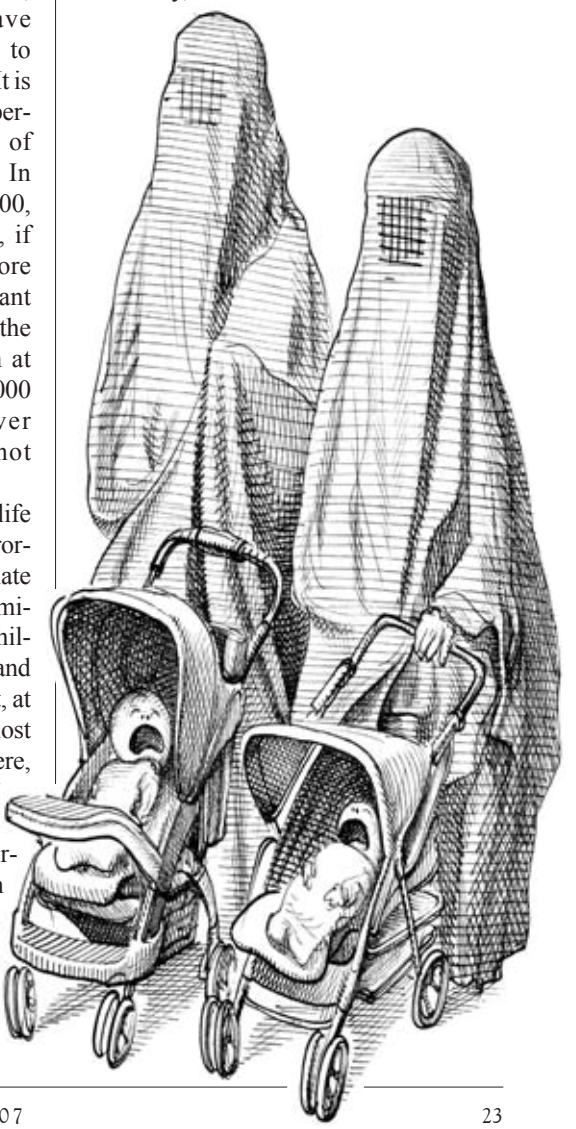
So why should it be any different with the Moslems? Are those who worry about them not akin to their predecessors who worried that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* had revealed that there was a conspiracy among Jews to take over the world (originally credited, though not for long, by the *Times* of London, and still available from any good Moslem bookshop)?

The problem for the complacent, however, is that not only have a small number of Moslem fanatics already blown themselves up, unlike the Chinese, Jews, Poles, and Hindus, but they seem to have received widespread understanding, to say no more, from their coreligionists. It is no consolation to the worried that 90 percent, 95 percent, or even 99 percent of Moslems do not support terrorism. In Britain, that still leaves 200,000, 100,000, or 20,000 who do support terrorism, if only intellectually. There may be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over 99 just men, but in the security services and the population at large there is more concern over 20,000 supporters of terrorism than over 1,980,000 peaceful men. This is not wholly irrational.

Moreover, familiarity with British life does not decrease the attractions of terrorism but seems in large part to stimulate them. It is not the original Moslem immigrants who are the problem, but their children, and this is so in France, Holland, and Germany as well as in Britain. Nor is it, at base, a problem of the inability of the host society to absorb immigrants—if it were, we might be worried by the problem of Hindu or Chinese terrorism, but we're not. There have been a few Sikh terrorists, it is true, who on one occasion blew up an Indian plane from Canada with more loss of life than any caused so far by Moslem terrorists in Britain, but they were wholly concerned with the particular situation in India of the time. They weren't trying to change Canada.

Although it is true that Moslems as a group in Britain have higher levels of unemployment, and lower levels of educational achievement, than any other group, this has little to do with any injustice committed against them and much to do with the social structure and ideas of the Moslem immigrants themselves. The startling success of other alien groups should be sufficient to prove it.

Besides, it is not from the poorest groups of Moslems that the terrorist leaders are drawn. Terrorism committed in the name of Islam is not a response to poverty or lack of prospects in the host society: It is precisely from the children of successful small businessmen, who go to university and could easily succeed in the host society, that the terrorist leaders are drawn. When the angst of educated petit bourgeois youth encounters a utopian fantasy, the result is often trouble. The



ROMAN GENN

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problem with Islam is that it still offers precisely such a utopian fantasy, plausibly if not inevitably derived from its doctrines: idiotic, incoherent, and perverse as it may seem to all those not caught up in it.

The situation in France is different from Britain, somewhat less propitious to the development of Islamist utopianism, with its attendant terrorism, but more propitious to widespread social unrest. The French state has never gone in for multiculturalism, and officially and unapologetically has always insisted that everyone, whatever his origin, become *un enfant de la patrie*, a *patrie* that is secular and republican while guaranteeing religious freedoms. Britain, by contrast, has required practically no allegiance to anything other than residence, not even the language, as a condition of citizenship (it is apparently necessary to translate the signs at British airports for "British passports this way" into Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi, and Bengali). British multiculturalism has been founded on the hope and the prayer that everything is compatible with everything else, and that we need practically nothing in common other than our humanity to live together.

Unfortunately, the rigidity of the French labor market has made it difficult for some of the newer *enfants de la patrie* to integrate into society by means of economic activity. This has left them feeling cheated by what they see as official hypocrisy. In Britain, by contrast, Moslems have been much freer, because of the greater flexibility of economic conditions, to start businesses. The restaurant trade alone has provided large numbers with opportunities for advancement. But in the absence of acculturation, this is precisely the group from which semi-intellectual fanatics arise.

In Holland and Denmark, absurdly generous social-security provisions have created a large dependent Moslem class, but like most dependent classes it is not at all grateful for what it receives. In fact, no European country has found the solution to the problem posed by mass Moslem immigration, which is one of the reasons that the traditional populations of western Europe are now a source of net emigration rather than of population growth. They have seen the future, and it doesn't work. **NR**

■ THE WORLD

In China's Tibet

The way life goes in a thoroughly occupied country

JASON LEE STEORTS

Lhasa, Tibet

You can come and go and never notice how damned creepy this town is. I write from a rooftop café in the Barkhor District, the one neighborhood in Lhasa that hasn't been bulldozed to make room for modern Chinese aesthetics (square buildings in white tile and blue glass). Western tourists see the new neighborhoods, of course. But they prefer to spend their time here, in this warren of alleyways I'm looking down on, this jumble of fluttering prayer flags and vegetable markets and Tibetan pilgrims who have come a hundred, a thousand kilometers to visit the Jokhang Temple, its gilded roof now aflame with sunset. If this is all you see, it's easy to suppose that the Chinese occupation merely added a layer of modernity to a society whose essence went unchanged.

That's because the creepiness is subtle. I first noticed it late last night, when a squad of policemen marched past me, their steps synchronized after a fashion rare in free lands. You see it in the daytime, too, but only if you know what to look for. Visit a monastery and you will not know (unless a Tibetan whispers it to you) that there were ten times as many monks before the Cultural Revolution, that the Chinese government now limits their number, and that many receive a paycheck from the Communist Party to act as spies. On your way to Mt. Everest, in your rented Landcruiser, you will pass through villages on the outskirts of Lhasa. But you will not know (unless you read Chinese) that the character spraypainted on every house is *chai*, "demolish"; and you will not know (unless your guide tells you, which, if he has an official guiding license, he will not) that the homeowners received no compensation for their farmland, on which more white tile and blue glass will rise.

It would be wrong to say that Peking is destroying Tibet just for the sake of destroying it, as were the Red Guards who answered Mao's call by smashing temples hither and yon. The boring technocrats who rule China today have no interest in ideological evil. But traditional Tibetan society is disappearing nonetheless, for two reasons. The first is the Chinese government's campaign to sunder the Tibetan people from their clerical and political leaders, most particularly the Dalai Lama. Second, and deeper in consequence, is the Chinese settlement that is slowly overwhelming all but the most inhospitable regions of Tibet.

To witness the Chinese attack on the Dalai Lama, all you must do is talk to a pilgrim who has tried to visit him at Dharamsala, India, the seat of his government in exile. That government puts the number of such pilgrims at 2,000 to 3,000 annually. The Chinese authorities refuse to authorize their travel, so they must sneak into India illegally. This often means a dangerous multi-week foot journey over extremely high and remote mountain passes. I met one pilgrim on his way back from Dharamsala when he stumbled past my tent in the foothills of the Himalaya. He had been walking for 23 days, carrying nothing but his clothes, traveling mainly at night to avoid the police.

He was of course lucky. On a bus in a traditionally Tibetan area of Gansu Province, I met a monk who had been arrested near the Indian border while attempting such a pilgrimage. He spent the next six months in prison. There he was beaten severely (a fellow inmate had his leg broken by the guards), forced to do hard labor, and fed only meager servings of tsampa, a dough made from raw barley meal and yak butter. Even this man had it luckier than some. The Chinese army has been known to use Tibetan pilgrims for target practice. One such case was reported in the West last year, after a party of mountain climbers caught it on film.

The Chinese try to stamp out loyalty to the Dalai Lama in other ways, too. Near Tingri, a town three days' walk from Mt. Everest, I heard rumors that the Chinese were entering homes at random and arresting their owners if a photograph of the Dalai Lama was on display. These

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rumors are impossible to confirm, but the Tibetans believe them: It is the sort of thing they are used to. I have been shown, in a Tibetan home in Sichuan Province, a room whose sole purpose is to house a photo of the Dalai Lama where the authorities cannot find it.

The mere existence of this room suggests that Tibetan loyalties to the Dalai Lama are largely intact, despite Chinese calumny against him. A new Chinese law forbidding any of Tibet's hundreds of "living Buddhas" from reincarnating without government permission may prove more destructive. Already more destructive has been the Chinese colonization of Tibet. It is impossible to get accurate information on the composition of populations in traditionally Tibetan areas, as the Chinese government uses a highly tendentious census methodology. What is indisputable is that Tibetans are fast becoming a minority in their ancestral lands. The Dharamsala government estimates that Chinese outnumber Tibetans in Lhasa by a margin of three to one. I cannot verify that number, but no visitor who sees a wide swath of Lhasa would deny that its population and general character are predominately Chinese.

The Dalai Lama slept here: Potala Palace (and the Chinese flag) in Lhasa, Tibet

This is very much an engineered phenomenon. In areas such as Eastern Turkestan and Inner Mongolia, the Peking government has subdued autochthonous populations by flooding them with Chinese migrants. It has long sought the same outcome in Tibet. For decades, Chinese settlers were given economic incentives to move to Tibetan cities such as Lhasa and Shigatse, even as rural Tibetans were denied the same opportunity. Today, the population transfer continues with a momentum of its own, greatly aided by the opening last year of a rail link to Lhasa. The authorities cover their motives with the barest of fig leaves. Even as they claim that Tibet is underpopulated, they enforce their family-planning policy among Tibetans with ever-greater stringency.

At the same time, they have used the schools to ensure that each generation of Tibetans is more Sinicized than the last. Because professional success requires working through the Chinese system, it is rare to meet a city-dwelling Tibetan under the age of 30 who does not speak Mandarin and dress as though he were Chinese. The government jealously bars any instruction whose curriculum is not subject to Chinese oversight. One Tibetan I know—a tour guide who is unlicensed, and therefore honest—wanted to open an elementary school in his hometown. But the officials forbade this enterprise as soon as they learned of it. In any case, he would have struggled to find teaching materials: "We cannot buy good books about Tibet or Buddhism here." (They are banned.) "We have to get what we can from Nepal or the West."

The attitude of Tibetans toward these changes is not monolithic. Some benefit from Chinese occupation: There are those spying monks, to begin with, and many other Tibetans on the government payroll, from police officers to senior Party officials. My guide friend thinks that the Tibetans are the worst of all: "The Chinese are often quite reasonable. I would much rather deal with them than with the Tibetan police." It would also be a mistake, he says, to romanticize life in Tibet prior to the Chinese conquest. He tells me the story of his grandfather, who, though already married and a father, fell in love with the daughter of a Tibetan cabinet minister. The minister showed his disapproval by having the unwanted suitor tied to a stake in the countryside, where he was eaten by wild dogs.

Whether or not such things were common in Old Tibet, there can be little doubt as to the injustice of its political structures. The traditional agrarian system—in which peasants toiled on monastery land—could probably not have survived the 20th century, even if it had escaped China's special brand of political murder–as–land reform. And the forces of commerce and modernization would have been enough in their own right to make Lhasa and Shigatse less "Tibetan" than the pre-modern nomadic areas. It is even possible that this change would have happened faster without Communism, as Tibet would have been more open to the outside world.

None of this excuses the evils of Chinese rule, of course: the political murders, the torture, the prisons, the famine, the desecration of holy sites. Nor are these evils excused by any benefit attributable to the Chinese (such as better infrastructure and health care). In all likelihood, the 21st century will see the death of traditional Tibet. This may accompany, paradoxically, an easing of political tensions: for there will soon be no one and nothing left to resist the Chinese. The Dalai Lama, knowing that Peking will try to replace him with a congenial puppet, has hinted that he will be the last in his line. The monasteries are shattered beyond repair. And the population increasingly must choose between ghettoization and assimilation into modern Chinese life.

Tibetan Buddhism will survive as a system of belief, even as the society it gave rise to vanishes. Tibetans will then go the way of China's sundry other minority groups, tamed natives who don their colorful costumes for the amusement of clucking tourists, most of them Chinese, most of these well-intentioned and able to ask, without irony, the questions a Cantonese man once put to me: "Didn't you see all those pilgrims at the Jokhang? Didn't you see the monks? How can you say Tibetans aren't free?" **NR**

ANDREW WONG/REUTERS

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■ CULTURE WATCH

Let's Do the Ponzi Flip!

The real-estate market cruises for a bruising

ROB LONG

If you want to know about the collapse in the home-mortgage business, I suppose you could read the *New York Times*, *The Economist*, *Forbes*, or the *Wall Street Journal*. The problem with that tactic is you'd then have to wade through a lot of hard words—things like *collateralized debt obligations* and *PIK-toggle notes*.

Or, you make yourself a big batch of popcorn and tune into Bravo, the cable channel that brings us *Top Chef* and *Project Runway*—two of the most popular and successful reality programs on television—and watch its newest show, *Flipping Out*, which stars a highly leveraged, Los Angeles–based "house flipper": a guy who buys houses, does a minimal amount of cosmetic primping, and then "flips" them a few weeks later for (presumably) a handsome profit.

The show follows Jeffrey, the house flipper, as he glides through town in his expensive car, screaming at underlings, plotting with contractors, and, especially, fretting over what the appraiser is going to say about his next purchase. Jeffrey is a gambler, it quickly unfolds, and his cash-flow position is, as they say on Wall Street, *problematic*. He needs the appraiser—the guy who works for the lender, usually a guy who lives in a cheaper part of town, driving a cheaper kind of car—to appraise his newest purchase at its highest, most optimistic, most the-world-is-a-wonderful-wonderful-kind-of-place valuation because, as Jeffrey tells the camera over and over again in increasingly strained and panicked tones, it's all about leverage. One property collateralizes another property which collateralizes a third property, and the wheel keeps tumbling along for as long as there are appraisers in cheap suits to charm and wheedle and, it is darkly implied, give inappropriate gifts to.

When you see headlines in the business press—and, soon, on the front pages of the newspaper, with words like *prosecution* and *federal regulators* and *handcuffs*—about the failure of some of the biggest home lenders in the country, you'll be tempted to think macroeconomics—interest rates, hedge funds, capital markets—instead of microeconomics, *super*microeconomics: a guy in a 1998 Buick Regal appraising a house worth $500,000 at $650,000 so that the flipper can qualify for a new loan on another property that *also* isn't worth what he'll borrow against it.

Here are my assumptions: One, Jeffreys are a little like termites—if you see one, there must be a thousand somewhere, hiding; and two, appraisers are human beings,

Flipping Out*'s Jeffrey*

and they're acutely aware that the only people in the real-estate business in 2007 who aren't making money are . . . appraisers. So that's lots of leveraged, desperate Jeffreys and lots of strapped, too-good-for-Wal-Mart appraisers, multiplied by the number of overheated real-estate markets in America (and do you know *anyone*, *anywhere*, who doesn't talk about the insane real-estate prices in his hometown?). Think about the torrent of home loans that are approved daily in this country and you'll start to get a sense of what we'll all be talking about this autumn.

The brake on all of this activity was supposed to be the quaint custom of the down payment. Home lenders required borrowers to have a little skin in the game. But that was before the likes of Countrywide Home Loans—the largest independent home lender in America—began offering a class of loans they playfully call *exotics*.

My favorite exotic is something called an *80/20 piggyback*, which is a loan for 80 percent of the value of a house, with a "piggyback" home-equity-line-of-credit loan (a *heloc*, in industry jargon) to pay for the down payment. So you borrow 80 percent of the value of the home, then immediately take out another loan to make the down payment.

Or, even more attractive to your inner Jeffrey, the *80/20 piggyback 20 cash-out* version, which includes the same two steps as the *80/20 piggy*, but adds a little twist: You take out an additional 20 percent of the value in cash, borrowing a total of 120 percent against a piece of property, with no money down. There is very little risk to these loans, as long as you discount the possibility that the appraisal may be high, the market may be soft, and the buyer may have six cents in the bank.

All these loans are then bundled up into financial instruments called *collateralized debt obligations*, which are, essentially, mystery grab bags of mortgages that are then sold off to investors, who assume that all Jeffreys are solvent and all appraisers are happy with the '97 Skylark.

And this is where it's going to get ugly. When the meltdown comes—and I'm not making any kind of bold prediction here; meltdowns *always* come—the investors are going to blame the lenders who are going to blame the real-estate brokers who are going to finger the appraisers—and a lot of people are going to go to jail. This month, several brokers in the Beverly Hills office of Prudential California Realty were indicted for a "property-flipping fraud scheme," which sounds a lot like most of the real-estate business in 2007, and is merely the overture to a very long opera. When people lose money, they instantly look around for someone to blame. As the home-finance collapse segues, like all financial collapses, to the courtroom, words like *fraud* and *conceal* and *deceive* are going to get tossed around without restraint. But the truth was always there, right in front of us, on Bravo. That's the problem with investors. They don't watch enough reality television. NR

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Is He for Real?

Assessing non-non-candidate Fred Thompson

BYRON YORK

Philadelphia

It's late July, and even though he's been on the non-campaign trail for five months, Fred Thompson has yet to appear on the same dais with any other Republican presidential candidate. That's about to change here at the Marriott Downtown, where both Thompson, the former senator from Tennessee, and Mike Huckabee, the former governor of Arkansas, are scheduled to address the annual meeting of the American Legislative Exchange Council, better known as ALEC. Its members aren't just any voters; they are state senators and representatives and other plugged-in politicos, mostly conservatives, from around the country. They're good people to know: If you're a Republican running for something, it never hurts to be tight with the top officials in Georgia, or Virginia, or Missouri. They're all here today, and a lot of them have been waiting for months to get their first up-close look at Thompson.

The event, a lunch in a hall packed almost beyond capacity, isn't really a contest, but it is a contrast. At this point in the campaign, Huckabee has performed well in three GOP debates and has polished his stump speech in hundreds of appearances. A man who has famously gone from obesity to running marathons, he's in top shape, on his game. He gives a speech that is tight, well-constructed, and impassioned, all from one scribbled notecard. By the time he's finished, the ALEC members are on their feet.

After a break, Thompson enters to great applause; the crowd is clearly ready to love him. But this, as it turns out, is not his day. He's just flown in overnight from San Diego, where he appeared at one of Sean Hannity's Freedom Concerts, and he appears a bit tired. Then, instead of delivering a rousing declaration of principles, he launches into a dry treatise on federalism. It's an important topic to these state officials, who agree with every word Thompson has to say about keeping the federal government out of state affairs. But it's just not what they expected, or were hoping to hear. To make things worse, the teleprompter goes on the blink for Thompson's speech, forcing him to put on his reading glasses and spend a lot of time peering at his text. And finally, when Thompson works a crowded rope-line after the speech, he becomes so overheated that when he ditches his suit coat he reveals a shirt soaked completely through, looking much the worse for wear. Huckabee, for his part, is shaking hands and posing for pictures on the other side of the room, coat on, looking cool.

When it's all over, most observers agree that the former governor has run rings around the former senator. "The consensus of the crowd was that Huckabee wowed 'em," John Wiles, a state senator from Georgia, tells me. "Thompson's speech was a disappointment."

"I thought Thompson really blew a good opportunity," says Bill Howell, who is speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates. "In my mind, Huckabee is right on, has a great delivery, is very articulate—all the things Thompson wasn't." Others are a bit more diplomatic—they say the speeches were just too different to compare—but they often add that they think Mike Huckabee is quite a speaker.

Thompson's Philadelphia stop is perhaps a small preview of his campaign to come. After much build-up, people came to see him with high expectations. Huckabee, having been in the race for months, was ready to rumble. And Thompson found himself under an intense—indeed, a literally hot—spotlight. Put it all together, and his appearance brought with it a high potential for disappointing, or at least underwhelming, the crowd.

Until now, Thompson, the former star of TV's *Law & Order*, has conducted an unconventional and brilliant campaign of "testing the waters," using the Internet, radio, and a few TV and personal appearances to attract an enthusiastic following among Republicans looking for an alternative to the current field of

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presidential candidates. But soon his campaign-to-be—he'll formally declare next month—will become more traditional. After Labor Day, voters will begin to pay serious attention to the candidates, and Thompson will be up against not just Huckabee but Rudy Giuliani, Mitt Romney, and his old colleague John McCain. Unlike his opponents, who will be cruising in high gear—they've been running hard for months now—Thompson will be learning on the fly, with a newly hired staff that is already having trouble working together and a candidate who hasn't run a serious campaign since his first election to the Senate in 1994. Most important, he'll have to convince Republican voters that he's truly different from the rest, that he's the real conservative in the race and, underneath the TV-star polish, not just another senator who wants to become president. It's an enormous gamble, even for a man who has undeniable appeal to the GOP base. These days, Fred Thompson is a man with no room for error.

CREATING THE BUZZ

The McLean Family Restaurant is a popular storefront—simple food, plain setting, folksy atmosphere—not far from Thompson's home and campaign offices in McLean, Va. Since it's in a well-to-do suburb of Washington, a lot of politicians pass through—you wouldn't be surprised to spot Newt Gingrich or Patrick Leahy there—and, one morning in August, Thompson joins me in a back booth to discuss the enormous effort of trying to get a presidential campaign going in the space of a few months.

Most candidates take years to decide that they want to run for president, he explains. He first started hearing from supporters perhaps nine months ago, after then-Sen. Bill Frist abandoned his run for president. (Thompson says he would not have considered running had his fellow Tennessean stayed in the race.) "I had a bunch of people from Tennessee want to fly up, a group of my old friends and supporters, to talk to me about it," Thompson tells me. He was flattered but not interested. "I asked them not to [come]," Thompson says. "It was going to be to encourage me to get in, and I didn't think I would."

He meant it. Tennessee congressman Zach Wamp, a friend, called Thompson last December, a few days after Frist's announcement, to gauge Thompson's interest. "It wasn't even on his radar screen," Wamp tells me. "He said his new child had just been born, his career was fantastic, and he was finally making some money. The answer was no."

At some point in the next few months, though, Thompson's mind began to change. Polls regularly showed that Republican voters weren't happy with their choices in the GOP race. Everyone knew the problem: Giuliani is too liberal on social issues, Romney is a flip-flopper, McCain—well, a lot of conservatives don't like him and never will. Thompson tells me he didn't size up the field when making his decision to explore a race—"My focus certainly has not been, 'Aha, this is a weak field, this is an opportunity for a nice young man like myself'"—but he did realize that he didn't see the perfect candidate out there. "Clearly, if I saw someone who I said, 'This is the right person for these times who can win,' and it was clear to me, I probably would have been thinking totally differently."

In January and February, Thompson started seriously thinking about a run, and while he was hearing encouragement from supporters around the country, he set about raising his profile to create more support. Along with his wife, Jeri, who played a key role in the effort, and three friends—Mark Corallo, a former Justice Department spokesman; David Bossie, a former top congressional investigator who now runs the group Citizens United; and Ed McFadden, another former Justice official, all of whom worked free of charge and in their spare time—Thompson devised the strategy that made him the talk of the conservative world.

First, the group paid a lot of attention to the conservative web. Jeri Thompson got in touch with National Review Online to ask if the website would be interested in publishing transcripts of Thompson's radio commentaries. (It was, and NRO published the commentaries semi-regularly until it became clear that Thompson was running.) Then they reached out to sympathetic bloggers. For example, in late January Erick Erickson, the Georgia political consultant who runs the blog Redstate, posted an article headlined "They All Suck," in which he denounced the Republican presidential field, "from the lecherous adulterer to the egomaniacal nut job to the flip-flopping opportunist with the perfect hair." A few weeks later, Erickson tells me, "I got a call from a friend of mine who is also a friend of Fred's. He said, 'I hear you're uninspired by other candidates. What do you think of Fred Thompson?'" Word of Thompson began to appear on Redstate, and Erickson soon heard from colleagues in the blogosphere. "I've had several other people say they had similar experiences—people calling them up and saying, 'I hear you're not excited by the other candidates, what do you think of Fred Thompson?'" Erickson says. "And all of a sudden they were enveloped in the campaign, networking back and forth with each other. It all happened very quickly."

The friend who called Erickson was Ed McFadden, who was also in close contact with *The American Spectator*'s website, where pro-Thompson postings began to appear. In web-speak, Thompson had gone viral, at least in conservative circles. The buzz reached a climax in early March, when the possibility of a Thompson candidacy dominated the annual Conservative Political Action Conference, or CPAC, in Washington. Carl Cameron, chief political correspondent for Fox News, picked up on it and reported that Thompson was "seriously considering" a run for president. A week later, Thompson appeared on *Fox News Sunday* and confirmed all the talk. "I'm giving some thought to it," he told host Chris Wallace. "[I'm] going to leave the door open."

"The response was substantial," Thompson tells me, with a bit of dry understatement. "So I thought more about it, and the response continued to be substantial, so over a period of time, I decided that I was going to put myself in a position to do it." Still more buzz followed when Thompson filled in for radio commentator Paul Harvey in March, and later, when Thompson filmed a response to filmmaker Michael Moore's movie *Sicko*. Featuring Thompson in his office, an unlit cigar in his mouth, the video was brief—all of 38 seconds—and just as biting as Moore himself. In the space of a few days, Thompson racked up up more than two million views on websites like Breitbart.tv and YouTube. "We learned that rapid response, along with a conservative message and a bit of humor, delivered via video, can be a very helpful tool when you're trying to put together a campaign for president very

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late with a limited ability to raise money," says one insider. "It was an enormous boost for his potential candidacy."

By summer, Thompson was riding high in the polls without having engaged in any of the rigors of traditional campaigning. He had come up with a brilliant strategy, one that might well be studied closely in future elections. But it left one question unanswered: What would a Thompson candidacy be *about*?

IS HE DIFFERENT?

Americans like executive experience when it comes to choosing a president; every occupant of the White House since John F. Kennedy has been either a governor or a vice president before taking office. The senators and former senators who run for president know this, so they usually tout their experience by portraying themselves as can-do guys, making things happen in Congress—just like real executives.

Not Fred Thompson. During his years in the Senate from 1994 to 2003, it was well known that he wasn't terribly fond of the work. He still isn't. During our meeting in McLean, when I ask him to tell me about his two or three most significant accomplishments in the Senate, he quickly shoots back: "You mean besides leaving the Senate?"

After a laugh, he continues. "I came to the Senate in order to help balance the budget, cut taxes, make Congress live under the laws that everybody else had to live under, start to rebuild and improve our defense, and reform welfare. I was involved in all that, and I think I was the leader in some of it." While those are big accomplishments, they are group accomplishments, and Thompson's claim is pretty modest, at least for a presidential candidate; 50 other Republican senators from that era could say something similar.

On the non-campaign trail, July 2007

Thompson also points out that he played a leading role in passing the bill creating the Department of Homeland Security, although he concedes that that may or may not have been the best way to address post-9/11 concerns. And he defends his role as a big booster of the McCain-Feingold campaign-finance law; he was the one who pushed, successfully, to raise what used to be the $1,000 limit on so-called "hard money" contributions. Whatever flak he has taken from conservatives who hated McCain-Feingold, Thompson tells me, "That bill would have been a lot worse if it hadn't been for me, because we would be where we are today, only with $1,000 limits."

That's not exactly the stuff of campaign commercials. Rather than his Senate record, Thompson will likely base his campaign on his belief that he can succeed in enacting a conservative agenda where other candidates would fail. And for the conservative voters who make up the Republican primary electorate, four issues—Iraq and national security; the Supreme Court; taxes and the economy; and abortion and gay marriage—will be critical.

On Iraq, Thompson, like all the other Republican candidates, supports giving the troop surge time to succeed. "We should not be competing with each other to see who can put up the white flag first," he tells me. "It makes us look weak and divided and gives encouragement to the enemy."

Still, Thompson doesn't hesitate to show his unhappiness with George W. Bush's conduct of the war in 2004, 2005, and 2006. "The strategy for a long time was just to kind of hold our own and hunker down while we trained the Iraqis to take care of themselves and for the government to get on its feet," he tells me. "Hindsight is 20/20, and I guess there's a case to be made for that, but there's not a case to be made for it year after year after year when the situation continues to get worse." When I ask Thompson about a statement last January by White House spokesman Tony Snow that American troops had "their hands tied behind their backs" by restrictive rules of engagement prior to the surge, he shakes his head. "The first thing I thought," he says, "was why in the devil were they ever fighting with their hands tied behind their backs?"

Now, even if American troops are on the right track, Thompson can't say how long the battle will go on. Calls for a quick American withdrawal from Iraq, he says, "reflect a lack of understanding that we are in a historic global conflict with people who look upon this as a war that's been going on for centuries, and they're plenty willing for it to go on for more centuries." On the campaign trail, he'll tell voters we're in the fight for a long, long time.

The Supreme Court, and judicial issues in general, are Thompson's strong suit. Not only does he have the background—the Watergate investigation, the Senate Judiciary Committee, private practice, and the job of guiding John Roberts through his confirmation hearings—he also knows the conservative legal stars who would likely be candidates for the Court in coming years. But he won't name names, beyond the men already there. "I like Roberts and Alito and Scalia and Thomas," he tells me. "We're in a heck of a lot better shape because of Roberts and Alito, and one more gain would put us in even better shape." Should he become president, Thompson would undoubtedly try to nominate that elusive fifth conservative.

On the economy, Thompson supports extending the Bush tax cuts, but he hasn't, as some have claimed, signed on to the "Fair Tax" proposal that would replace income taxes with a consumption tax. "I believe in a progressive tax system," Thompson tells me. "But we've got 40 percent of Americans now paying the entire tax bill, or 99 percent of it, and five percent are paying over half the taxes in America. That's pretty progressive, and it shouldn't be more so."

At virtually every public appearance, Thompson pushes the idea of entitlement reform. In a talk with donors before his Philadelphia speech, and again with me in McLean, he stresses

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the coming bankruptcy of Social Security. As president, he would try to reform the system. Since George W. Bush failed to do that—at perhaps his strongest moment as president, immediately after his 2004 election victory, and with 55 Republican votes in the Senate—I ask Thompson why he thinks he can succeed. "I think that's leadership that can only come from the top," he tells me. "What's happened in the past is interesting and relevant, but not in any way determinative of the future."

On abortion, Thompson has a solid pro-life Senate voting record. But he was hurt recently when the *Los Angeles Times* reported that in 1991 he lobbied on behalf of the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association, which was seeking to change the rule against abortion counseling at clinics that receive federal money. Later stories showed that Thompson billed for nearly 20 hours of work on the project.

A Thompson spokesman first denied that Thompson had ever lobbied on behalf of the association. Then the campaign began to backtrack. Now, Thompson, who admits he mishandled the controversy, says he doesn't remember what happened. "Clearly, I did some work for them," he tells me. "I don't remember what I did, but clearly I did something, so I was representing a pro-choice group."

As for abortion itself, Thompson says he's always been against it, but his feelings have deepened since seeing sonograms of his daughter Hayden, now three. "Although my votes remain the same, and my administration would remain the same as they otherwise would in terms of being pro-life, as a person, as a human being, I do have a deeper understanding and feeling than in times past."

On gay marriage, Thompson is opposed, but he believes states should be free to recognize civil unions. "If people want to make arrangements and understandings with each other, there's nothing the government should do to interfere with that, as far as I'm concerned," he tells me. But the issue should be left to the states, which "ought to have the right to make whatever different laws on civil unions that they want to make, or not have them at all."

Altogether, there's no doubt that Thompson is a solid conservative who would govern as one. But it's hard to claim that his positions are terribly different from those of the other conservatives running for the Republican presidential nomination. Instead, what Thompson is betting on—he said so explicitly in his discussion of Social Security—is that he will be a more effective leader than the other guys, and that he will be more able to convince ordinary Americans to support his initiatives. But first he has to convince them to vote for him.

THE COMING CAMPAIGN

In the spring, Thompson brought in pollster John McLaughlin for advice on the state of the GOP race. McLaughlin had felt there was a gap in the field ever since his favored conservative candidate, former Virginia senator George Allen, dropped out of the race. He told Thompson conditions were right for a new candidate. "You could see where, among voters who were supporting Rudy and McCain, support was soft," McLaughlin tells me. "The actual voters were to the right of the candidates they were voting for. Six out of ten of Rudy's and McCain's supporters were conservatives, and three out of ten were very conservative."

McLaughlin became part of a group of advisers that has grown from the original team of Thompson, his wife, and three friends to the proportions of a formal campaign. Thompson has hired a new campaign chief, a communications director, a spokesman, issue people, advance people—lots of staff, although their number is still significantly smaller than other campaigns. With that growth has come what insiders call growing pains. In July, the campaign parted ways with Tom Collamore, a Thompson friend who ran the effort in its early days. Other staffers departed as well, as Randy Enwright, a respected GOP operative from Florida, was brought in to run the effort. Thompson calls it nothing unusual for a new campaign. "It's not a wholesale shakeup," he tells me. "Hell, I may do that another time or two before it's over with."

The changes came amid rumors that Jeri Thompson was really running things, and that her presence caused friction among the staff. There's no doubt she has been a powerful force in the effort from the beginning: "We started literally from the kitchen table a few months ago," Thompson says. But during our conversation Thompson tells me she has always acted at his behest. "She did what I asked her to do."

The criticism is sure to accelerate in coming months, as Republican opponents who mostly steered clear of Thompson during the summer will include him in the normal rough-and-tumble of the campaign. Things are already getting tough in private conversations. "He is a conceptual candidate," sniffs one insider from a rival campaign. "Sure, he can point to how he voted on motions to recommit, but this campaign is going to be about the future, and he hasn't really laid out any positions beyond rhetorical talking points."

"It's a non-non-campaign, and maybe there's more media fabrication about it than anything else," says an official from another camp. And from yet another: "The whole thing got out of hand. Everyone thought it was going to be easy and fun, and it's not going to work. Campaigns are really, really hard, even when you're doing everything right and have the fire in the belly. You can't do it on the back of an envelope at the last minute."

Is Thompson ready? Despite the claims that he's not a hard charger, he seems to be going pretty fast these days. He's been working out and slimming down (at McLean Family Restaurant, he ordered a vegetarian omelet with EggBeaters). He looks good, but at some point his health and motivation will become issues. In April, he revealed that he has non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a slow-moving cancer that his doctors say is in remission; beyond that, he says, his health is good. And then there is his age. Thompson will be 66 on Inauguration Day 2009. Only two presidents—Ronald Reagan, who turned out pretty well, and William Henry Harrison, who didn't—were older when they took office. "My cards are on the table," Thompson tells me when I asked about his age. "People are free to judge for themselves."

In the end, the verdict on Thompson will depend on whether he can convince voters that he really is different from the other, more established GOP candidates, and that he has the best chance of defeating Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama in November 2008. Thompson is an impressive man, sly-smart with varied life experiences, and he has convinced himself he can do it his way. Whether his plan can survive contact with the real world of the campaign trail is another question. **NR**

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■ PEOPLE & PLACES

The House of Chambers

. . . and the assault of the local bureaucrats

JOHN J. MILLER

On the night he tried to kill himself, Whittaker Chambers wrote a letter to his two children. It did not include a detailed account of the Alger Hiss spy case, which had driven Chambers to what he called "spiritual exhaustion." Instead, the letter contained simple fatherly advice: "I urged them," he said, "never to leave the land."

Chambers was thinking of Pipe Creek Farm, in Westminster, Md.—the family home since the 1930s and the site of the famous Pumpkin Papers incident. He lived to see it again: He botched the suicide and decided to continue testifying against Hiss. Eventually he would die on the farm, of natural causes. So would his wife. Their ashes were spread on the land—a land that their son, John Chambers, never has left.

"My family will live here for generations," says Chambers, who is about to turn 71. "But only if we're able to hold off the county commission."

That's because the government of Carroll County wants to build a dam that would create a 325-acre reservoir. The purpose of the serpentine reservoir is to accommodate future growth. "We need the water," says Julia Gouge, president of the county's board of commissioners.

What was once a sleepy rural region whose remoteness had attracted Whittaker Chambers now finds itself on the outer fringes of the massive combined metropolis of Baltimore and Washington, D.C. If John Chambers doesn't willingly hand over at least 15 acres of the land his father left behind, the county is ready to seize it as a matter of public necessity under its powers of eminent domain.

The proposed Union Mills Reservoir would not submerge any of the three houses on the Chambers property, which is nearly 400 acres in size, nor would it come near the spot where Whittaker Chambers stashed microfilm in a hollowed-out pumpkin at a climactic moment during the Hiss ordeal. To the son, however, the damage would go far beyond the loss of 15 acres, or an additional parcel of the farm that the reservoir would cut off from the rest of his land. "This place is about more than the pumpkin patch," he says. "You can't tell me that one part of it matters less than another part of it. This is our home."

THE BEST THE WORLD GIVES

It was Alger Hiss who first learned of the property in the 1930s, when he and Chambers were in regular contact—Hiss was a Soviet agent inside the federal government and Chambers was his handler. "In conversation with the Hisses, my wife or I had said something about the effect of the Baltimore heat on our daughter, and had spoken of renting a small place outside the city," he writes in his autobiography, *Witness*. "One Sunday Alger appeared with a newspaper advertisement of two small properties at Westminster."

They paid a visit. Hiss was so charmed by a modest house on one of the lots that he put down a deposit. Later, he backed out. Later still, Chambers returned to the site and put down his own deposit: "I had scarcely any good reason or right to buy it. I did not know how I was going to pay for it. But it was one of those occasions when a man feels: this I am meant to do."

Witness is widely considered one of the great autobiographies of the 20th century, valuable as both historical document and literary achievement. In it, Chambers offers an account of his life in the Communist underground, his rejection of its murderous ideology, and his reasons for testifying against Hiss before the House Un-American Activities Committee. The Hiss-Chambers case—which ultimately led to the conviction of Hiss as a perjurer—remains an object of left-wing obsession. Just about everybody accepts that Hiss was guilty of espionage, but a dwindling band of radicals still clings to the fantasy of his innocence. Earlier this year, Kai Bird and Svetlana Chervonnaya argued at a New York University conference that Hiss was not a spy—they identified another figure, who previously had escaped suspicion, as the real traitor. Their claims, accepted only by die-hard Hiss partisans, also appear in the summer issue of *The American Scholar*.

Witness begins with a reference to the farm: "I am sitting in the kitchen of the little house at Medfield, our second farm which is cut off by the ridge and a quarter-mile across the fields from our home place." The book goes on for some 800 pages and contains a few of the best-known lines in the literature of conservatism. One of these—"I see in Communism the focus of the concentrated evil of our time"—became the inspiration for one of the most famous utterances of Ronald Reagan, who was a great admirer of Chambers. (A copy of *Witness* may be seen on the shelves of the Reagan Ranch in California.) Elsewhere in the book, Chambers predicts that, in abandoning Communism, "we are leaving the winning world for the losing world." He also declares that "the crisis of the Western world exists to the degree in which it is indifferent to God."

For all the passion that Chambers summons against Communism, some of the book's most heartfelt passages involve the farm. "Our farm is our home. It is our altar. To it each day we bring our faith, our love for one another as a family, our working hands, our prayers," he writes. "The farm is our witness. It is a witness against the world. By deliberately choosing this life of hardship and immense satisfaction, we say in effect: The modern world has nothing better than this to give us."

The controversy surrounding the Hiss case had forced Chambers to quit a well-paying job as an editor at *Time*. Although *Witness* was a commercial smash hit, Chambers suffered financial problems and had to sell a portion of the farm—a part known as the "home place" or the "front place." The family moved into a brick house known as the "back place" because it's at the rear of the property, away from the main road. Chambers spent the rest of his life in it, working as a senior editor of NATIONAL REVIEW in the late 1950s and dying in 1961. Esther Chambers lived there until her death in 1986.

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GOUGED BY EMINENT DOMAIN

John Chambers has spent much of his life there as well. For many years, he worked as a journalist and congressional aide. Like his father, he farmed on the weekends, bailing hay and raising sheep. He married, remarried, and brought up a family. In 1988, during the final year of the Reagan administration, the Department of the Interior designated the farm a National Historic Landmark.

"My lifelong ambition has been to reunite all the pieces of the farm, to make it a complete reality once again," says the son. Several years ago, he purchased a piece of property inherited by his sister, who lives in San Francisco. And last October he bought back the home place. This was the site of the pumpkin patch, though today no pumpkins grow there—it's just a plot of grass on a front lawn.

There are no signs pointing to the farm, but intrepid conservatives occasionally have sought it out. "It happens every week or two," says Chambers. Some just snap a photograph and move on. Others knock on the door and try to strike up a conversation.

Chambers has made a few lasting friends this way. One of them is Mauricio Tamargo, a Cuban-born official in the Bush administration. "I was rereading *Witness* a few years ago and realized that the farm wasn't far away," Tamargo says. He figured out its location, got to know Chambers, and currently is trying to establish a non-profit group to help preserve the property. "It would be terrible if the county flooded part of it."

Tamargo would like to help Chambers build a small library on the site of an old calving shed, so that the farm's occasional pilgrims have a place to learn about the property. It would contain everything from Chambers family mementos to books and papers that nobody up to now has seen, including Chambers biographer Sam Tanenhaus. "I would like people to understand my father's work," says John Chambers. "They should see the house and the crops. It will help them understand why he did what he did."

The Union Mills Reservoir isn't a new concept. "It goes back to the 1960s," says Steve Horn, the county's director of planning. Last fall, shortly after Chambers re-acquired the home place, Tamargo requested a map of the county's reservoir plans. He was surprised to see that, although the proposed flooding would cover only those 15 acres, about one-third of the entire property fell within a "minimal acquisition line" marked in red. A part of the line runs close to the back place—"easily within shouting distance of the house," says Chambers.

Did the county intend to grab such a large chunk of the farm? Worried about that possibility, Chambers began to meet with neighboring landowners who shared similar concerns. Tamargo contacted members of Congress. In January, a dozen of them signed a letter to the county commission urging it "to modify the plan so as to cause no harm to any portion of this historic farm." Around this time, the county altered its map: The area within the "minimal acquisition line" was relabeled a "water-resource protection zone"—"whatever that means," says Chambers, who possesses a native distrust of government. He also fears that heavy rainfall would cause the reservoir to overflow its planned boundaries and threaten the back place.

A view of the farm

Even so, the county appears determined to press forward. "We hope to appraise the impact of the reservoir, enter a good-faith negotiation, and reach a financial settlement," says Horn. If Chambers refuses to engage in these discussions, the county will try to acquire the property through eminent domain. "So far, there's just no talking to him about it," complains Gouge. Opposition from Chambers isn't the only challenge the reservoir faces: A complicated permit process requires the involvement of several state and federal agencies. If all goes smoothly for the county, it could be ten years before the reservoir fills up.

In *Witness*, Chambers writes: "Land belongs to the man who has worked it until he knows it so well that he can cross it in the blackest night." John Chambers also has come to know the land well. What a shame it would be if, on some dark night, he found himself not walking through its fields but splashing through them. **NR**

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the bent pin

FLORENCE KING

The Rogue Vogue

"WHAT fresh hell is this?" was Dorothy Parker's automatic response to a ringing telephone. It's the question I ask myself when Americans latch on to a word that allows us to talk incessantly about something we don't want to think about. We did it with "surreal" when we abandoned realism; we did it with stoutly delivered barks of "Absolutely!" when we abandoned absolutes; and now we are doing it with "rogue."

Not the noun, mind you. "Rogue" has ceased to mean a naughty but lovable scamp like Errol Flynn. We use it as an adjective, as in "rogue male," i.e., an elephant who separates himself from the herd, turns vicious, and goes off to commit solitary mayhem. Zoologists have always known the term but the general public first learned it from the 1939 novel, *Rogue Male*, by British author Geoffrey Household, whose name may have driven him to write it. It's about a gentlemanly but sociopathic assassin who is hunted by the forces of the Establishment after his cover is blown. As with the novel it inspired, *The Day of the Jackal*, we root for the cold anti-hero to win (when the bullet intended for de Gaulle's head plowed into the blacktop, the movie audience groaned) because he is, in his affectless fashion, a man of honor.

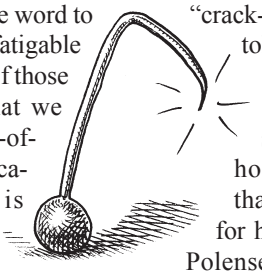
Americans assume that our country was built by rogue males but there's more to the breed than wanderlust and rugged individualism. Wild West nutcases were just that and nothing more; there were so many of them that they constituted a new herd, thus defeating the principle. Our politicians also come up short. Not Nixon (too insecure); not Teddy Roosevelt (too boyish); not Joe McCarthy (too plebeian). The herd instinct is so powerful in politicians that only Andrew Jackson comes close. As for military men, their nemesis is the ultimate herd they call the "chain of command." Not MacArthur (a real rogue male would have nuked China without asking). Not Confederate beaux sabreurs (too idealistic), and not Sergeant York (too religious). Only Patton makes the cut, which explains why the 1970 movie was so popular despite the virulent anti-military mindset so prevalent at the time. Americans may not be able to define "rogue male" but we know one when we see one.

And if we don't happen to see one, not to worry: We've still got the word to make flesh with, the way indefatigable optimists make lemonade out of those lemons life hands them. What we hear in "rogue male" is its one-of-a-kind connotations, its implication that all bad behavior is an exception to the rule. As with the other words we have latched on to, repetition is the key to self-hypnosis. Say "rogue male" enough and it becomes a magical incantation that imparts psychological reassurance and invites us to settle comfortably into denial. With 24-7 repetition provided by cable news, we can convince ourselves that America's ominous trends toward unabashed criminality, moral turpitude, cultural suicide, and destructive stupidity do not mean that the country is collapsing. Why? Because there are no ominous trends, just rogue males.

Barry Bonds is a rogue athlete. Post-Katrina New Orleans is full of rogue cops; Durham, N.C., prosecutor Mike Nifong is a rogue DA; Larry "This body belongs to me right now" Seidlin is a rogue judge. The Georgia crematorium manager who never got around to cremating the bodies he was paid to cremate was a rogue undertaker, and the piles of undelivered mail found under a Chicago bridge were dumped there by a rogue postman. Calling them rogues cloaks their sins in the romantic swashbuckling imagery of Alfred Noyes's story poem, "The Highwayman."

The latest is NBA referee Tim Donaghy, caught point-shaving and game-fixing, of whom NBA commissioner David Stern said: "We think we have here a rogue, isolated criminal." While the segment was airing, Fox News ran a little photo of Donaghy in the lower righthand corner of the screen, labeled "Rogue Ref?"

The votaries of political correctness also stand ready to pin a "rogue" on anyone who breaks ranks. Their latest target is Cleveland city councilman Mike Polensek, who writes threatening letters to the troublemakers in his crime-ridden district telling them to shape up or get out of Dodge. Never a man to mince words even when cussing out his own constituents, Polensek called a particularly lethal homeboy a "crack-dealing piece of trash" and told him he was "dumber than mud." He should have said "dumber than a post" or something, because the homeboy's mother decided that "mud" was a code word for her son's color and accused Polensek of racism. Never mind that he was inundated with adoring letters and phone calls, the die is cast: Stand by for "rogue city councilman Mike Polensek," the one-of-a-kind exception to the rule.



What if people start confusing rogue maleness with Alpha maleness and we try to cure it? America doesn't want to cure it but we're too far into denial to admit that, and as there is no known cure for what ails the pharmaceutical industry, we soon may be forced to watch commercials for Rogue Male Syndrome (RMS). *Brand name: Rogux. Generic name: Testosteruin. Side effects: periodic urges to rampage, sudden interest in the "Elephant Man," spontaneous bellowing, recurrent dreams about boneyards, diarrhea, constipation, rash. Warning: Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant should leave at once.*

We are crying havoc and loosing the dogs of societal war, which have been trained by dogfight impresario Michael Vick, the man whose hobby most resembles the sanguinary trail left by the eponymous charging elephant. NR

Florence King can be reached at P.O. Box 7113, Fredericksburg, VA 22404.

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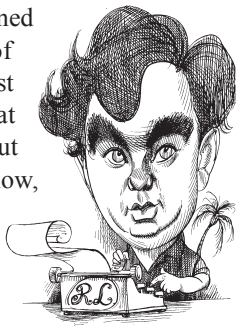
the long view

ROB LONG

http://www.scottthomasbeauchamp.blogspot.com

November 3, 2007
My New Suit

A lot of you have been asking about the new suit I was wearing on Larry King last night. Well, when I got home from Iraq—it's a long story; most of it is here and some of it is here on the New Republic website, but the basic gist is, after my Baghdad Diarist piece for TNR was attacked for (minor) inaccuracies, I asked for and received an honorable discharge from the Army. Funnily enough, a week before I shipped back stateside, I earned a Bronze Star for an act of incredible heroism that I just totally spontaneously did at the totally perfect moment, but because I was like, you know, basically not in the Army anymore they were all, "Well, you've basically earned a Bronze Star, but we technically can't give you one so you'll just have to know that you've got one without actually having the physical thing to prove it," which was cool with me—anyway, where was I? Oh, right, the suit: so I get back to the States and it's suddenly like, Larry King, Anderson, Russert, you know, the circuit, right? Plus I'm meeting like gajillions of literary agents for the book I'm writing, so I go to Bergdorf's to get a new cool suit and the one I want is almost $4,000, which is sort of a lot, I know, but my Simon & Schuster advance is way high, so I splurge. But as I'm yelling at the idiot tailor to take the pants in at the crotch, I suddenly see myself in the three-way mirror. "What have I become?" I wonder. "What has this war done to me?" I ask. And then I have to kick the tailor away from me since he's kind of messing up my view and he falls over and some of the pins he's carrying in his teeth get lodged in his throat and so I'm basically screaming with laughter and just totally cracking up as he rolls around clutching at his neck and he's blue and gurgling in pain and I'm howling and I see myself again in the mirrors and think, "Damn this damn war."



November 5, 2007
Sitting Here

I'm sitting here in the green room before doing Anderson Cooper. CNN's got Wi-Fi, which is cool. In the makeup chair a few minutes ago, the makeup lady was telling me that earlier today she had to do the makeup for a show which was about this disease people get where their skin hardens. Sclero-something or whatever? Anyway, she's telling me about this really disgusting disease and I'm thinking, "Hey, her hands touched that and now they're touching me?" So I ask her if it's contagious and she tells me it's not contagious but it's pretty gross and we both giggle at how awful it must be to have that kind of disgusting problem. And I think about how this war has turned us all into monsters and then a guy tells me there's cookies in the other room and I have some and they're good. Unlike this war. Which if I didn't already know from my time in Iraq, I certainly confirmed in that makeup chair.

November 7, 2007
Got a Super-Bitchy IM

Got a super-bitchy IM from Frank Foer at TNR, basically saying that they wouldn't reimburse me for my flight to LA to do Bill Maher since I'm not "really" a reporter for them. I was like, "You're damn right I'm not a reporter! You think a reporter could've filed stories like mine?" I cannot let that negative stuff get to me. It demeans me and it demeans the guys back in Iraq.

November 13, 2007
Lunch at Michael's

How long do I have to wait for a freaking salad? I'm supposed to be having a quick lunch with my literary agent and then I want to get some colorful shirts for when I do Jon Stewart later this week. So I'm sitting here and ALL I ORDERED was a SIMPLE SALAD but it's taking like a bajillion years. Seriously. I've been sitting here in this restaurant for hours. Okay, okay: I'm exaggerating. But exaggeration is how I deal with the post-traumatic stress of Iraq, okay? It's my way of coping with the pain and the dehumanizing whatever. If I wasn't allowed to exaggerate, I'd be, like, some kind of giant crazy delusional ass.

November 17, 2007
After Jon Stewart

Here's the YouTube link to my Jon Stewart appearance, which I think went really well, except that I think the war and all of its cruelty has pretty much turned Stewart into a world-class a-hole. He was totally stone-faced during my imitation of how much fun we used to have running down stray dogs with our Bradleys, even though the audience seemed to love it. And when I did my whole "dancing with the skull we dug up from a mass grave" bit, he looked like an Easter Island statue. And then he's all like, "Well, why didn't you just *not* do all of that stuff?" And I'm like, jeez! What crawled up his skirt and died? Hey, Jon! It's a comedy show, okay? I was just trying to keep things lively by sharing the many ways in which this war has turned me and my colleagues into bloodthirsty animals. Don't forget: I'm the victim here. I'm the victim of this awful, senseless war. Me and some of the other guys I used to hang out with over there. Don't try to turn this around on me. Anyway, I'm sure I'll have more fun tomorrow on Conan.

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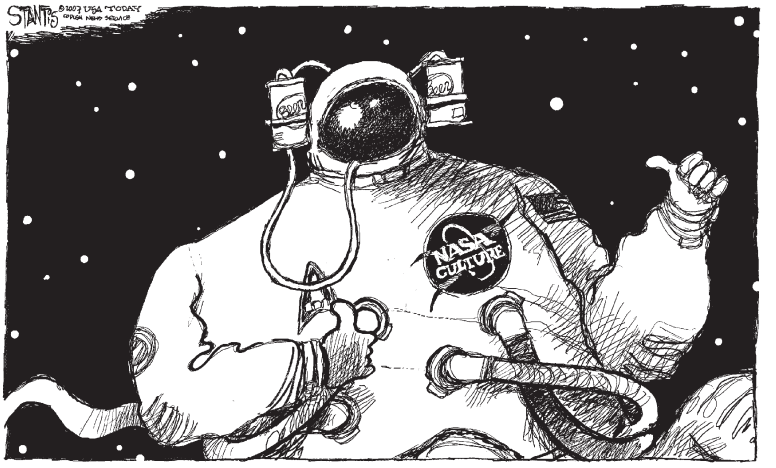
HELP!!!!

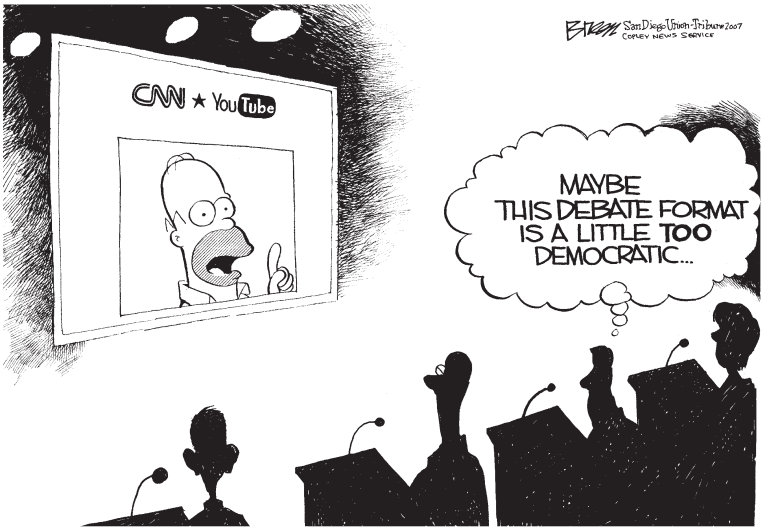
Obama at the Tiller

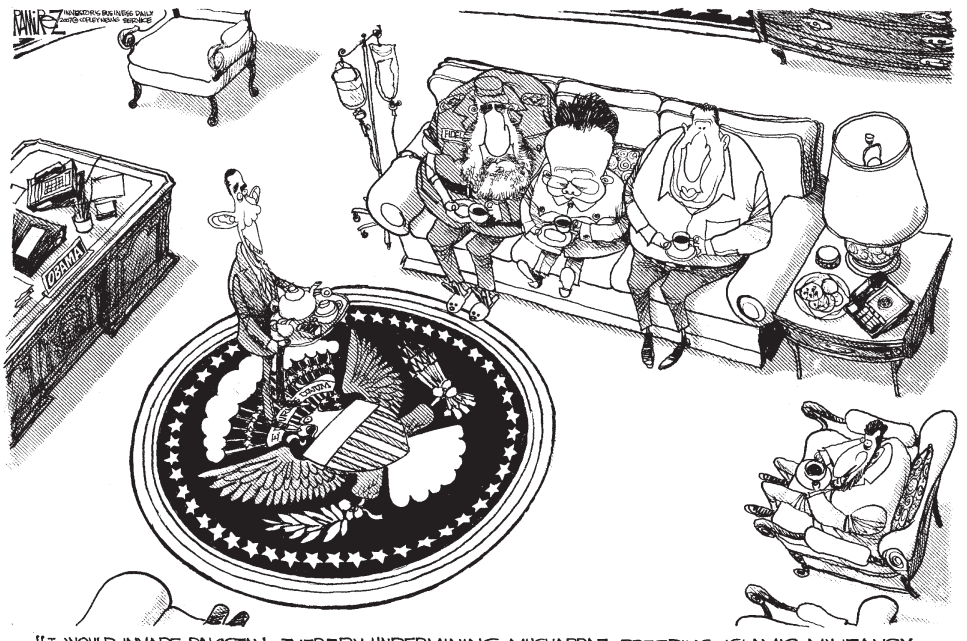
He would have scared the pants off
Phlegmatic Bismarck, though
The Kaiser's respiration—
Affecting his torso
Till medals jingle-jangled—
Would have alarmed the troops.
In Pakistan, Musharraf's
Eyes bulge like Betty Boop's.

—W. H. von Dreele

"It was horrible!—I dreamed that the Bushes and Clintons intermarried!"







"I WOULD INVADE PAKISTAN, THEREBY UNDERMINING MUSHARRAF, BREEDING ISLAMIC MILITANCY AND DESTABILIZING A NUCLEAR POWER. MORE TEA ANYONE?"

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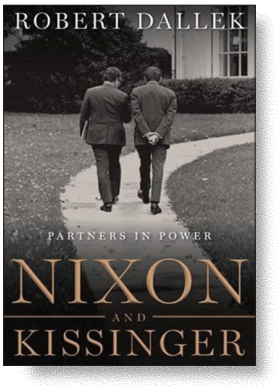
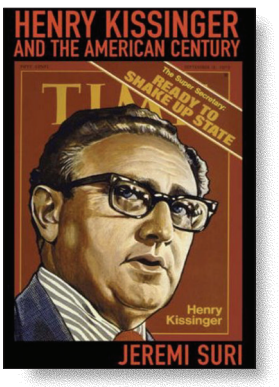
Fog of History



Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power, by Robert Dallek (HarperCollins, 752 pp., $32.50)



Henry Kissinger and the American Century, by Jeremi Suri (Belknap, 368 pp., $27.95)

DAVID FRUM

A protracted war. Divisions at home. Insecure energy supplies. Tensions with allies. America in 2007? Yes, but also America in 1969. In the introduction to his new study of the foreign policy of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, Robert Dallek writes: "I am convinced that the many questions raised in this book have relevance for current national and international problems."

The questions faced by Nixon and Kissinger do indeed resonate in our own time. Should Americans promote democracy abroad? How can peace be kept between India and Pakistan? Between Arabs and Israelis? Across the Taiwan Strait? How much deference should Congress show the president in foreign policy?

Nixon and Kissinger articulated forceful and coherent answers to these questions and many more—and Americans have fiercely debated their answers for nearly four decades. The debate continues into our own time. When President Bush charged, in his November 2003 Whitehall Palace speech, that "your nation [Britain] and mine, in the past, have been willing to make a bargain, to tolerate oppression for the sake of stability," it was Nixon and Kissinger he was criticizing.

You might imagine that a historian would hesitate to join this voluminous and ferocious controversy unless he had something new and important to say. You would imagine wrong. Robert Dallek has written bestselling books about John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. Somebody—his publisher, his agent, his wife, the financial-aid officers at his children's colleges—obviously decided it made sense for him to add another administration to the series. Whoever that unknown adviser was, he did Dallek no favor.

Nixon and Kissinger represents itself as a deep new study of the making of American foreign policy. In reality, it is a hasty summary of newly released memos and phone transcripts from the Nixon and Kissinger archives, lightly seasoned with authorial commentary.

Dallek's researches have unearthed one or two new examples of Nixon and Kissinger's disparaging each other behind their backs. But this is a well-known story, and (to paraphrase an old joke) the quotes that are new are not juicy, and the quotes that are juicy are not new. In fact so little of this book is new that the reader familiar with the period (and who else is going to work his or her way through 600-plus pages of bureaucratic detail?) will find himself flipping through the pages at accelerating speed muttering, "Tell me something I don't know!"

As for Dallek's own personal remarks and asides, all I can say is that if you've been reading the editorial page of the *New York Times*, they too will be familiar and over-familiar. Dallek champions a kind of prelapsarian liberalism, innocent of all knowledge that any other point of view exists, has existed, or might possibly exist. I'll settle for just a single example, from pp. 140–141. It's complicated, but important in itself—and all too sadly revealing of Dallek's habitual intellectual weaknesses.

First, the necessary background: After the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, the Soviets launched a massive nuclear-arms buildup. The Johnson administration did not respond in kind, and, by 1969, America's former nuclear superiority had been definitively lost. While the Soviets built, Americans designed. U.S. weapons technicians devised a brilliant response to the Soviet buildup: Rather than match Soviet missiles one for one, the U.S. could install multiple warheads on each U.S. missile. Better still, these warheads could be independently targeted, allowing the U.S. to hit three Soviet targets at the same price the Soviets paid to strike just one.

This new technology, acronymed MIRV (for multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle), was vehemently opposed by nuclear-arms controllers. The arms controllers asserted as a matter of faith that the Soviets would quit building just as soon as they caught up with the U.S. Their advice: Pause—permit the catch-up—and then see if a new, theoretically more stable equilibrium could be negotiated.

That was one point of view. There was another, advanced by people who studied Soviet politics rather than nuclear game theory: These Sovietologists argued that the Soviets would build regardless of what the U.S. did. A U.S. pause would go unreciprocated. If the U.S. did not adopt MIRV technology, it would soon find itself dangerously vulnerable to a Soviet first strike.

These were the arguments that President Nixon had to weigh as he decided whether to proceed with MIRV or not. And here, in full, is what Dallek has to say

Mr. Frum is an NR contributing editor, a former presidential speechwriter, and the author of several books, including *Dead Right*.

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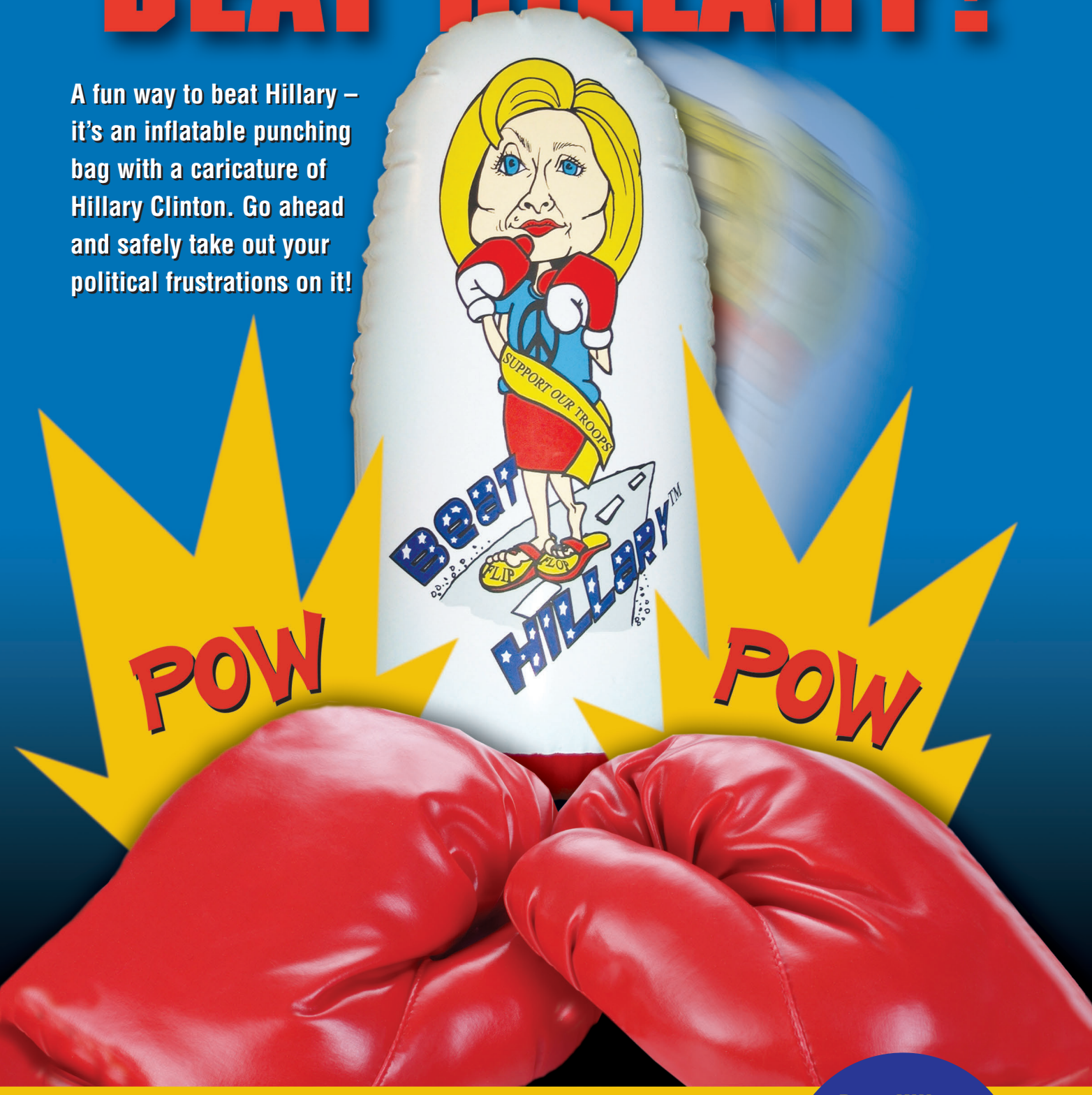
BEAT HILLARY!

A fun way to beat Hillary – it's an inflatable punching bag with a caricature of Hillary Clinton. Go ahead and safely take out your political frustrations on it!



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about this soul-searching dilemma:

> As many as forty Senators urged a moratorium on MIRV testing. The British also weighed in with a recommendation for "a MIRV ban. They argued—as did MIRV-ban supporters at home—" Henry told Nixon, "that unless these weapons are stopped we will have done nothing to prevent a new phase in arms competition." Subsequent events would prove them right.

Sorry, this won't do. It won't begin to do. "Subsequent events would prove them right"? Which subsequent events? Prove it how?

The debate over the sources of Soviet conduct has assumed rich new life since 1991. Many Soviet archives are now open, Soviet principals have given interviews, and we can understand their actions on the basis of evidence, not ideology. Leading scholars of the period, like Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali in their *Khrushchev's Cold War* (2006), have demonstrated that Soviet decision-making was more reckless and aggressive than even the gloomiest hawks feared. Most historians now accept Carter defense secretary Harold Brown's 1979 assessment of Soviet nuclear strategy: "When we build, they build. When we cut, they build."

Maybe Robert Dallek disputes that assessment. Fair enough. But he needs to provide some evidence, some reason, some grounds to dispute it. Instead, he asserts. And asserts, and asserts again, revolving drearily between regurgitation of familiar facts and repetition of familiar opinions, without literary style or psychological insight. It takes some effort to make Nixon and Kissinger boring, but in this one respect at least Dallek exceeds all past performances.

NOBODY will ever accuse Jeremi Suri of lacking style or insight. His study of Henry Kissinger's personality and place in history offers piercing originality—so much so that laying down Dallek for Suri feels rather like that moment in *The Prince and the Showgirl* when Laurence Olivier, after telling all and sundry that they have too little love in their life, meets his ex-mistress . . . and realizes that she has too much.

Suri fires off insights and theories about Henry Kissinger at a rapid clip. He especially delights in paradox.

Did Kissinger's own historical work emphasize the creative role of the statesman in the shaping of the destinies of nations? Suri argues that in Kissinger's case, the times shaped him much more than he shaped the times.

Was Kissinger's Jewishness an obstacle to his success? Yes—but also, Suri argues, indispensable to it. Not even 25, the young Kissinger found himself entrusted by the U.S. Army with enormous administrative responsibilities in occupied Germany: As a German, he knew the language and the country; as a Jew, he was immune to Nazi sympathies.

Is it not odd that a professor could rise so high in the world of power? On the contrary, Suri argues in a chapter on the "Cold War University," in the 1950s academics found themselves in proximity to power as never before or since.

What about Kissinger's reputation for bloodless amoralism? Utterly wrong, says Suri: "The invocation of moral purpose through force and diplomacy, and faith in strong leaders, were long-standing elements of Kissinger's thought." If he seemed to scant moral concerns, that reflected not amoralism but his "skepticism of democracy, his sense of cultural hierarchy, his faith in state power, and his fear of political chaos."

So he was a great conservative then? Certainly not: "Kissinger was above all things a revolutionary."

Hmm. Well, can we at least say whether he succeeded or failed? No, we cannot. Suri hails Kissinger's achievement in the Middle East: excluding all great-power competitors from the region, suppressing Arab–Israeli wars, securing the American energy supply. On the other hand, Suri also endorses the anti-Kissinger critique that by relying so heavily on iron-fisted dictators, Kissinger's policies accelerated the region's political and economic failure, stoked radicalism, and helped incite instability down the road. So it's all really six of one, half a dozen of the other, isn't it?

Suri's book has real merit despite its lack of strong conclusions. Still, I think most readers will find it only slightly less frustrating—if far less boring—than Robert Dallek's. Much as it's interesting to understand Kissinger as a German, as a Jew, as a refugee, as a writer and thinker, as a self-made man, as an intriguer and schemer, as a visionary and moralist, what most of us want first and above all is to understand him as a maker of American foreign policy.

What are we to think of the difficult choices and moral compromises of the Nixon-Kissinger years? Were Nixon and Kissinger right about democracy and stability? Were they wise to demand so much power and secrecy for the presidency? Can there be any excuse for Chile and Taiwan? Did they deceive the public on Vietnam, on arms control—or did they deceive themselves? Did their ends justify their means? Did they even have ends? Or were they just desperate improvisers, making the best of the very bad legacy they inherited when they entered office in 1969?

We have Nixon's and Kissinger's own answers to these questions, set forth at vast length in their memoirs and other books. We have the accusatory histories of William Bundy, Walter Isaacson, and Christopher Hitchens. But we still await the deep and substantial assessment that those tumultuous years deserve. **NR**

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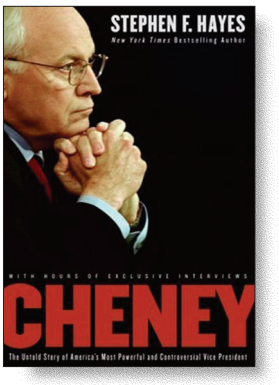
. . . Get A Dog


STEPHEN F. HAYES
New York Times Bestselling Author
WITH HOURS OF EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS
CHENEY
The Untold Story of America's Most Powerful and Controversial Vice President

Cheney: The Untold Story of America's Most Powerful and Controversial Vice President, by Stephen F. Hayes (HarperCollins, 592 pp., $27.95)

KATE O'BEIRNE

'Don't you think your book will have to be a hatchet job in order to have credibility?" a top White House correspondent asked Stephen Hayes as he was researching his biography of Dick Cheney. A "hatchet job" on Cheney would have followed the well-worn path of his media coverage over the past six years—but Hayes's engaging account tells *The Untold Story of America's Most Accomplished and Experienced Vice President*.

There was a time when this substitute subtitle of mine could have won the unanimous endorsement of the National Press Club's membership. The caricature they have since embraced—of a reckless, malevolent, power-hungry Dick Cheney—is impossible to reconcile with the man whose remarkable career Hayes so ably explores.

When he returned to Washington in 2001, Dick Cheney was no stranger to the city's press corps. A thick file of old clips chronicling his 25 years in the capital (which it's impossible to imagine he would bother preserving) would reflect an earned admiration for his singular achievements. With both fresh material, including unprecedented access to the famously reticent Cheney for 30 hours of interviews, and a well-researched examination of his experiences and views, Hayes portrays a vice president who remains the serious, temperate, and thoughtful individual who headed east as a budding political scientist so many years ago.

Cheney outlined the ethos responsible for his success in remarks to last year's graduating class from his (and his accomplished wife, Lynne's) high school in Casper, Wyo. He advised the teenagers: "Stay focused on the job you have . . . take your present job seriously. Do the work in front of you. Try to find ways to make yourself indispensable." Cheney's uncommon approach to his career—at odds with that of the typical politician, who seeks more power and craves more attention—is responsible for the repeated refrains of "Get me Dick Cheney" from presidents, congressional leaders, and corporate CEOs.

President Bush confirms that their relationship reflects the value and influence of an intensely loyal vice president without his own personal agenda or political ambitions. But Cheney does have his own views, and Hayes reveals how they differed from the decisions made about both the occupation policies and military strategies in Iraq.

The bare facts of Dick Cheney's résumé reveal his talent. In 1969, he went to work on an academic internship for a junior member of the House minority, and six years later, at age 34, he was among the most powerful men in the country as chief of staff to President Ford. In his welcome tonic to the toxic coverage Cheney currently endures, Hayes provides startling reminders of the accolades he once enjoyed. In a note to Cheney two weeks before Jimmy Carter's inauguration, the White House press secretary expressed his personal gratitude for the chief of staff's "extremely able" efforts. Ron Nessen wrote, "I know that your own very good relationship with the press reflected favorably on President Ford's good image among reporters and also helped my White House Press Office over some of the rougher spots."

In only his second term as Wyoming's sole representative in the House, Cheney held the fourth-highest position in the GOP leadership. By 1988, he was second in command of his caucus, the presumptive favorite for minority leader and widely viewed as most likely to be the next Republican Speaker of the House. He was a natural pick for the editors of *U.S. News & World Report*, who included Cheney among the "Best of the Hill" and described him as "the Republicans' most articulate, reasoned spokesman."

In 1989, he resigned from the House and was unanimously confirmed by the Senate as secretary of defense. Reflecting the enthusiastic, bipartisan support for one of Washington's most admired politicians, Sen. Al Gore congratulated President Bush for his selection of Cheney; Sen. Ted Kennedy declared, "America's defense policy is back on track." The *Washington Post*'s David Broder praised the "superb choice," explaining that "Cheney is smart, he is tough, and he is totally trustworthy."

Cheney's interest in a presidential bid in 1996 prompted more press accolades. "One of Cheney's strengths, all GOP pros agree, is that he has no detractors," wrote Morton Kondracke in *Roll Call*. Kondracke also noted that, in addition to enjoying broad support among his own party, Cheney was "well-liked by the press and the bipartisan Beltway establishment, which is unusual for a Republican." Broder highlighted the many assets Cheney would bring to the race: "a sense of gravity, seriousness, competence, and self-confidence, unmarred by either pomposity or obvious self-promotion." Broder quoted a former Democratic congressman who served in the House with Cheney: "I trust Dick, and so does damn near everyone who knows him."

Said a former Democratic congressman who served in the House with Cheney: 'I trust Dick, and so does damn near everyone who knows him.'

Cheney remains amused that his fans in the media managed to overlook his "more conservative than most people realized" congressional record. "The press never looked at my voting record," he explains. "They thought I was all warm and fuzzy and they never looked to see."

In recounting Cheney's early experiences, longstanding convictions, and firm attitudes, Hayes demonstrates that the vice president hasn't undergone a metamorpho-

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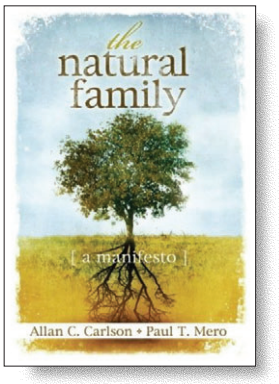
sis that would justify the media hostility that is his daily fare. In 1974, for example, when the Ford White House was facing the Church Committee's investigation of alleged CIA misdeeds, Cheney—as deputy to chief of staff Don Rumsfeld—worried about "legislative encroachment on executive power." He later argued with his congressional colleagues in defense of President Jimmy Carter's prerogatives, especially in the use of military force. When James Baker sought his advice, "restore power and authority to the executive branch" topped Cheney's list of priorities for Reagan's incoming chief of staff.

In their first meeting after the inauguration, Vice President Cheney told his counsel that his one job was to restore the power of the presidency. In the early months of the Bush administration, Cheney refused to provide Congress with details about the inner workings of the Energy Task Force he chaired. In what would become a familiar pattern in countless later controversies about the Bush administration, his refusal set off a firestorm of ill-informed outrage bolstered by misleading press accounts—and would later be vindicated. (The Supreme Court upheld his position in a 7–2 decision.)

When Congressman Cheney served on the House Intelligence Committee he would occasionally visit CIA headquarters to discuss their findings and conclusions, winning the praise of agency officials for his diligence and thoroughness—but, after he became vice president, his trips to Langley for in-depth briefings were portrayed by his critics as blatant attempts to intimidate analysts in order to manipulate pre-war intelligence on Iraq. Hayes's detailed accounts of these and similar allegations provide a convincing refutation of the media narrative that has so unjustly tarnished Cheney's well-deserved reputation.

Stephen Hayes reminds us that Vice President Cheney assumed office with a rare, sophisticated understanding of the strengths and limitations of our national-security institutions. Since 9/11, his daily obsession is the "hell of a threat" we face in the War on Terror. Now that his story has been told, a grateful public should recognize their good fortune in having the vice president we have at such a perilous time. **NR**

Bulwark of Liberty



The Natural Family: A Manifesto, by Allan C. Carlson and Paul T. Mero (Spence, 272 pp., $27.95)

W. BRADFORD WILCOX

To read Allan Carlson and Paul Mero's *The Natural Family: A Manifesto* is to realize how little the Republican party has done for American families over the last 30 years. To read it is also to discover just the right antidote to the latest libertarian efforts to dismiss or downgrade the importance of traditional marriage, articulated in the last year by the likes of Brink Lindsey, Ryan Sager, and even—sad to say—George Will. The book also outlines a range of good family-policy ideas.

Carlson and Mero have given us an engaging and accessible primer on the importance of the "natural family" for the American experiment in ordered liberty. They define the "natural family" as "the fundamental social unit, inscribed in human nature, and centered around the voluntary union of a man and a woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage for the purposes of satisfying the longings of the human heart to give and receive love, welcoming and ensuring the full physical and emotional development of children"—and sharing a home based on a common social and spiritual life. By turns philosophical, political, sociological, and economic in its subject matter, *The Natural Family* makes three particularly important arguments.

Mr. Wilcox, assistant professor of sociology at the University of Virginia and a fellow at the Witherspoon Institute, is lead author of *Why Marriage Matters, 2nd Edition: Twenty-Six Conclusions from the Social Sciences.*

First, as against the libertarian vision of Lindsey et al., Carlson and Mero correctly argue that the natural family, not the individual, is the "source of ordered liberty, the fountain of real democracy, the seedbed of virtue" for the nation. They point to a large body of social-scientific research that shows that children who grow up with their married parents make markedly better citizens than their peers who are not so fortunate. For instance, one study of 20,000 American adolescents funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development found that teen criminality was lowest among children from intact married families and that parental involvement, supervision, and closeness were highest in these families. They also point out that family breakdown leads inevitably to what should be a libertarian nightmare—the rise of Leviathan, as the state steps in to establish order and supply social services when the family breaks down.

This argument is borne out by, among other things, our nation's recent history with crime and policing. As George Akerlof, a Nobel Prize–winning economist at Berkeley, has observed, it was no accident that a tidal wave of violent crime, police hiring, and prison building swept the country in the late 1970s and 1980s, following closely in the wake of the nation's retreat from marriage in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Starting in the late 1960s, because of this retreat, growing numbers of poor and working-class teenage boys and young men ceased to be socialized by fathers and wives; consequently, they were much more likely to get into trouble and stay in trouble than their peers of an earlier era. This led, in turn, to the effort of Republicans such as Rudy Giuliani to reach for "Big Government" law-and-order solutions to reassert order in communities hit hardest by the breakdown of the natural family.

Second, Carlson and Mero rightly argue that strong families depend upon much more than sentiment or even the right "family values." In our day, affluence, state programs, and the organization of work and leisure have all

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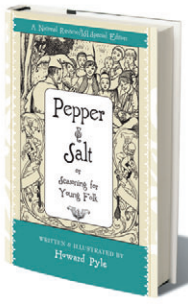

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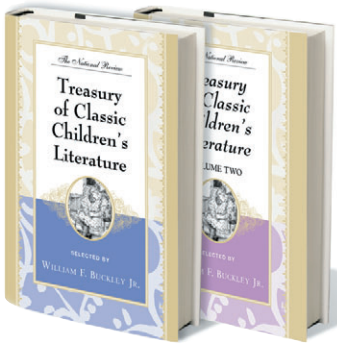

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conspired to strip the family of its traditional functions—economic production, leisure, moral education, and religious education—and to minimize the practical and economic dependencies linking spouses, children, and parents to one another. Accordingly, in many families, sentiment is the only real tie that binds, even though—for many families—sentiment is much too fragile to serve as the basis for an enduring common life together. Thus, Carlson and Mero argue that we must re-functionalize the home—by encouraging measures such as home-based work and businesses, a "family wage" for parents who have to work outside the home, home schooling, and home-based care for elderly parents. In sum, the natural family will be renewed only when our economic and practical lives bind us more tightly to our spouses, children, and parents.

Third, an implicit if not always explicit message communicated by *The Natural Family* is that the Republican party and the larger pro-family movement have not accomplished much in their three-decade effort to promote pro-life and pro-family policies. Carlson and Mero argue that the larger pro-family movement has been beset by squabbling, and a desire to go negative—that is, focus on the latest assault on family life—to keep the coffers full. Although they do not say much about the Republican party explicitly, they do point out that the average four-person family is now paying a lot more in taxes than it did in the 1950s—despite the fact that the Republicans have had numerous opportunities over the last 30 years to take a serious stab at remedying the tax burdens of families with children in the home. More fundamentally, they point out that most family-related social trends—from illegitimacy to pornography to the marriage rate—have worsened since the Republican party's ascendancy started in 1980.

So what might be done to turn around the nation's four-decade retreat from marriage? While acknowledging the importance of cultural renewal, Carlson and Mero present a number of creative public-policy ideas that would help renew the natural family.

On the legal front, they propose that state governments reintroduce "fault" into laws governing divorce—to give greater legal force to the marriage vow, to increase spouses' confidence in their marriages, and to ensure that innocent spouses are not hit with the loss of property and child custody just because their spouse wants out of the marriage. On the tax front, the authors contend that the personal-income-tax exemption for children should be increased to $5,000, that the current $1,000 child tax credit should be indexed to inflation, and that families should be given generous tax credits for their Medicare and Social Security taxes when they are caring for children and elderly parents (20 percent for each child 13 and under, and 25 percent for each parent or grandparent in the home).

Policies such as these would lend legal and financial power to the natural family, and deepen the dependencies that sustain it. In turn, by shoring up the nation's best department of health, human services, and justice—i.e., the natural family—these policies would reduce the need for the expansion of local, state, and federal government. Now there is a cause around which conservatives can unite. **NR**

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■ MUSIC ■

The Bard of Optimism

KYLE SMITH

In a cab recently with a fellow critic, I found myself taking up the rusted cudgels of an argument I've been conducting with anyone who was willing, and many who were not, for 25 years. I suggested, possibly out of nowhere, that Paul McCartney was not only a genius in his field but *the* genius: the most essential member of the undisputed best musical group, the author of a huge volume of brilliant post-Beatles work, an evolving and important artist in his seventh decade—in short, the most monumental figure in pop music. My friend sniffed, "I find his recent work shallow." I asked him what recent work he was referring to; he allowed that he had heard none of it. Still, he said, "I find his public persona to be shallow."

Lennon fans know they're on wobbly ground when they try to defend their man's work—starting in 1966, as the Beatles were graduating from ditty merchants to a transformational force, every album contained more top-level McCartney compositions than Lennon ones. (The first side of *Sgt. Pepper*, for instance, contains seven classic songs—five written by McCartney. *Let It Be* contains three McCartney greats and one by Lennon. And so on.) "We got fed up with being sidemen for Paul," Lennon said in 1970, but the gap in their achievements only widened when Lennon lost McCartney's leadership.

So the Lennon legend trades heavily on his "public persona," a mirror of how critics see themselves—angry, intellectual, political, up-to-the-minute, independent, informed, uncompromising, rebellious, pessimistic, complicated, caustic, ambivalent, experimental, important. McCartney is held to stand for the opposite of all of these things.

Mr. Smith, a film critic for the *New York Post*, blogs at kylesmithonline.com.

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Lennon fans aren't wrong to link the personality and the artist, but they mistake trappings for wellsprings. McCartney was the one with the genuine artistic temperament, and because of this his work surpasses Lennon's. McCartney—unpretentious, industrious, determined, responsible, devoted to his family, undistracted by fads or marches—is driven to create beauty, out of suburbia ("Penny Lane"), his mother's death ("Let It Be"), or Lennon's murder (the 1982 ballad "Here Today"). He approaches his calling the way true artists do: as a job.

Calling McCartney shallow is itself shallow, and anyone who thinks he is a has-been has ignored his recent album, *Memory Almost Full*, and two other excellent discs he's released in the last decade. These recordings have brought his entire career into focus: He is not a fool on the hill but a resourceful optimist who chooses to resist despair.

If any rocker has earned the right to snarl, it's McCartney. Breast cancer took away both of the most important women in his life: his mother, when he was 14, and his wife Linda, 42 years later. His closest friend dumped him (Lennon, not McCartney, was the one who ended the Beatles, though this was not publicly known at the time). This is McCartney, the supposed blithe candyman, reflecting on the breakup in a 1984 *Playboy* interview:

> I was on the scrap heap. . . . It was just the feeling, the terrible disappointment of not being of any use to anyone anymore. It was a barrelling, empty feeling that just rolled across my soul. . . . It was bad on Linda. She had to deal with this guy who didn't particularly want to get out of bed, and, if he did, wanted to go to bed pretty soon after. He wanted to drink earlier and earlier each day and didn't really see the point in shaving, because where was he going?

McCartney crawled out of the hole by forming Wings: "The answer to losing your job," he figured, is, "well, let's try to get another job." Lennon may have been a professional outlaw who wrote "Attica State," but McCartney is the one who actually did time—nine days in Japan in 1980 after a pot bust. Though McCartney remembered his incarceration as "hell," he played up the comedy: "Well, I'd seen *Bridge on the River Kwai*: I knew what you had to do when you were a prisoner of war! You had to laugh a lot and keep cheery and keep yourself up. . . . The first thing I expected was rape. That was my big fear. Right? Wouldn't that be yours? So I slept with me back to the wall."

Like his critics, McCartney has wondered whether a happy marriage was keeping his work light—"I suppose if you did get a bit content, then you might not write savage lyrics and stuff," he once said. But savageness weighed down Lennon; his most vicious tunes are often his most vacuous, and "Woman is the Nigger of the World," "God," and "Working Class Hero" amount to silly hate songs. *National Lampoon* dubbed Lennon's early-Seventies work "Magical Misery Tour." Lennon was taking lead and turning it into lead. Then nothing was heard from him for five years; in the same period, McCartney released five top-ten albums.

In the last decade, age and tragedy have challenged McCartney. He has responded with three of the best six albums of his entire post-Beatles career: *Flaming Pie* (1997), *Chaos and Creation in the Backyard* (2005), and this summer's *Memory Almost Full*. (His other indispensable albums: 1989's *Flowers in the Dirt*, 1973's *Band on the Run*, and 1982's *Tug of War*.) Lately misfortune has performed the role Lennon once did—roughing up his sanded edges. While Linda was dying in 1997, McCartney released *Flaming Pie*, whose peppy lyrics were belied by dark musical shadings, minor keys, and a wary singing style. In several songs, a line or two hint at what the McCartneys were up against: "Somedays I cry, I cry for those who fear the worst" ("Somedays"); "Life, as it happens / Nobody warns you / Willow, hold on tight" ("Little Willow"). Throughout, there is a will to force a positive outcome: "When you're wide awake / Say it for goodness' sake / It's gonna be a great day" ("Great Day").

After Linda's death, McCartney rushed into a marriage to the former model Heather Mills and declared he was fine. The 2001 album *Driving Rain* showered praise on Mills. But on 2005's *Chaos and Creation in the Backyard*, which was released just months before McCartney's divorce became public, the lyrics seemed to acknowledge both that he had made a mistake in marrying Mills and that he had not fully dealt with his loss. The jaunty first line on *Chaos*, "There is a fine line between recklessness and courage," is a jibe aimed at himself, and redolent of his collaborations with Lennon. The album is magnificent, McCartney's best since the 1980s. He was testing the psychic equipment that had prepared him for this moment his whole life, and the struggle had become larger than himself: If the eternal optimist can't rebuild himself, who can?

Here is the irrepressible one dealing with loneliness for the first time, in "Friends to Go": "I've been waiting on the other side / For your friends to leave so I don't have to hide / I'd prefer they didn't know." "English Tea" may be McCartney's finest ballad since "Maybe I'm Amazed": Musically, it has the muted beauty of *Rubber Soul*; lyrically its chip-

SOMEDAY TO FUJI

Let's someday fly to Fuji's isle.
I'll wear a knee-length, knotted gown
of crepe in blues and periwinkles
with you blasé in brown.

The foreign tongue will be a thing
I've neither studied nor discussed
with you. You'll speak it fluently,
and I will need to trust

your judgment in hotel and market
for bargaining, respect, and bread—
a fair price for a silken fan,
a maid to make the bed.

Nowhere is there a local ridge
I've wished to climb or photograph.
Their scales and shapes seem cause
to wince,
their legends cause to laugh;

their levels, by comparison
with rises I cannot attain
inferior, somehow—their flora,
gauche,
their beauty, plain.

But Fuji, with its strange
profoundness,
mythology, cognition, mist,
lies far—like love which must be kept
exotic to exist.

—JENNIFER REESER

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per Englishness, in the playful spirit of "When I'm 64," plays against the shadows to sublime effect. Other ballads—"Too Much Rain," "A Certain Softness"—have both the melodic intensity and the restraint of such mid-period Beatles ballads as "For No One."

This year's haunting album, *Memory Almost Full*, includes the darkest song of McCartney's career, "The End of the End." Here he is confident of an afterlife yet confronts finality:

> On the day that I die,
> I'd like bells to be rung
> And songs that were sung
> To be hung out like blankets
> That lovers have played on
> And laid on while listening
> To songs that were sung.

It's a lapidary song that goes beyond the groovy flower-child sloganeering of McCartney's similar Beatles song "The End" to approach death with both unusual frankness and a stirring optimism that takes comfort in accomplishment and the gifts we hand down to others.

As if acknowledging that, in the end, McCartney had it right, Lennon himself left the world and rejoined his family. In 1980, after an 18-month separation from Ono, after a love affair, bed-ins, est, and protest, he recorded—for his final album, *Double Fantasy*—his most sincere, mature, timeless songs. They are about himself, his wife, and his child: "Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy)," "Woman," "(Just Like) Starting Over," and "Watching the Wheels." Like McCartney's works, they are heavily produced, melodic, gorgeous pop songs.

Their praise of homey pleasures and simple optimism represents a defection from the countercultural magic kingdom that Lennon and Ono had enthusiastically ruled but the McCartneys shunned. Ono, speaking of *Double Fantasy* weeks before her husband's death in 1980, said, "John has talked about the Sixties and how it gave us a sense for freedom—sexual and otherwise. It was like an orgy. . . . Men and women somehow lost track of each other and a lot of families and relationships split apart. . . . We tried to rationalize it as the price we were paying for our freedom." Lennon's last work is not a period piece, but a return to lasting cultural and musical values—the values Paul McCartney never left behind. **NR**

■ FILM ■

Re: Bourne

ROSS DOUTHAT

THE Left owns the movie industry, but conservatives can take some solace in the fact that two of Hollywood's most profitable genres are right-wing to the core. I speak, of course, of the horror movie and the action film. (Evelyn Waugh they ain't, but at least they're something.) In between the gore and the goosebumps, horror flicks undercut the arrogance of scientism, punish promiscuity, and vindicate the truth claims of religion. (If you're looking for silver-screen condemnations of Seventies permissiveness, you could do worse than to start with *The Exorcist* and finish up with *Halloween*.) Action movies, meanwhile, are islands of patriotism, moral clarity, and—I kid you not—geopolitical realism in a sea of Left Coast anti-Americanism.

Think about it: Didn't *Red Dawn* offer a more accurate depiction of Soviet Communism than *Reds*? Wasn't *True Lies* ultimately a more realistic portrait of the threat posed by radical Islam than *Syriana*? Didn't the James Bond movies come closer to the truth about the Cold War than a thousand disillusioned productions like last year's *The Good Shepherd*? Wasn't *Predator* a more serious take on the dangers posed by interstellar visitors than the egregiously pacifistic *E.T.*?

Okay, maybe scratch that last one. But the point stands: Liberals like their heroes rumpled and white-collared and speaking-truth-to-power, Robert Redford–style, not armed and dangerous and ready to take on the terrorists or Communists by whatever means are ready to hand. All of which makes Jason Bourne, the CIA-created death-dealer who's back for more close-quarters mayhem in *The Bourne Ultimatum*, such a remarkable creation. He's the first great left-wing action hero: James Bond for *Nation* readers, a John McClane that even Noam Chomsky can love.

This isn't just because the Bourne movies' politics are a farrago of CIA-bashing joined to post-9/11 paranoia. It's

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because Bourne himself resolves the great contradiction bedeviling the liberal action movie—namely, how do you make your hero a killing machine (as any action hero needs to be) without making him politically incorrect and illiberal along the way? The ingenious solution is to make Bourne an *unwilling* killing machine, a man whose body is a weapon that his amnesia-ridden mind doesn't understand, or even quite control. Bourne kills with fluid, crowd-pleasing ease, but it isn't his fault: He was made that way.

Just before the latest *Bourne* installment hit theaters, the star and the director sparked a minor controversy by taking potshots at James Bond: Matt Damon called him "an imperialist" who "kills people and laughs and sips martinis and wisecracks about it," while Paul Greengrass dismissed 007 as "an imperial adventurer of a particularly English sort" who "likes violence" and "has no guilt." (Just in case we weren't clear on the point, Greengrass added: "Personally, I spit on those values.") They were obnoxious, but absolutely right: Jason Bourne (note those initials) *is* the anti–James Bond, and what makes the Bourne movies so remarkable is how successfully they invert the Bond formula, turning everything on its head but leaving the thrills intact. Indeed, the only action movie I've seen in the last twelve months that's better than *The Bourne Ultimatum* is, well, *Casino Royale*.

I say that even though *Ultimatum* is the weakest of the three Bourne outings. The Bond saga eventually grew stale because 007's dizzying array of enemies tended to be roughly the same *kind* of enemy; the weapons and exotic hideouts changed, but the goals remained the same. The three Bourne movies have a more immediate problem: The plot of each one is *exactly the same* as its predecessor. Bourne hopscotches around Europe, looking for information about his past; the CIA, at once omnicompetent and ineffectual, tries to catch or kill him; in the final reel, he takes down one of his corrupt Agency father figures, regains a small piece of his past, and vanishes as the curtain falls. The players barely change: In *Identity*, he was pitted against leathery CIA heavies played by Chris Cooper and Brian Cox; in *Ultimatum*, he faces off against leathery CIA heavies played by David Strathairn and Albert Finney. Joan Allen and Julia Stiles are back as his Agency sympathizers, and, for the third time, an assortment of rival hitmen are on his tail. (Here the drop-off has been steep—from Clive Owen in *Identity* to athletic no-names like Joey Ansah and Edgar Ramirez this time around.)

Moreover, in an effort to raise the stakes, *Ultimatum* ratchets the CIA's combination of omnipotence, ruthlessness, and incompetence to giggle-inspiring levels. This is an Agency that can hack into any computer system or phone conversation on Earth, kill off a nosy British journalist (from the *Guardian*, naturally) in a crowded London train station without anyone noticing, order the murder of its own personnel as casually as you might order up a TPS report—but that keeps records of all its black-ops work in a wide-windowed Manhattan office building that anyone can walk into, stashed in a binder conveniently labeled "top secret."

But the action, kinetic and riveting, covers a multitude of sins. Greengrass favors shaky, handheld, quasi-documentary shots—a technique he used to devastating (if morally dubious) effect in *United 93*—and stunningly precise editing. The effect is to throw the audience, again and again, into the middle of things, whether it's a car chase in Manhattan (complete with a *French Connection* shout-out), a rooftop footrace in Tangiers, or a barehanded fight to the death, in which the camera follows Bourne and his adversary as they grapple their way into ever more constricted space—a living room, then a bathroom, then a shower stall. The chase scenes are pure geometry, all intersecting street and rooftops and overlapping lines of sight; the fight scenes are chaos theory made flailing, gouging flesh.

Matt Damon in The Bourne Ultimatum

Damon himself is stripped-down and deadly as a bullet, returning yet again to the watchful underacting that's central to the character's appeal. He plays Bourne as a monk of war, with a purity that distinguishes him from the ordinary run of action heroes. There are no Austrian accents, bulging muscles, or catchy quips; there are only the bursts of violence, and the tense, coiled, quiet moments in between.

It's this lethal-seeming stillness that makes the Bourne movies so riveting, in the end. We don't know what he's going to do next, but we know we want to watch. **NR**

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The typical ROM purchaser goes through several stages:

1. Total disbelief that the ROM can do all this in only 4 minutes.
2. Rhetorical (and sometimes hostile) questioning and ridicule.
3. Reading the ROM literature and reluctantly understanding it.
4. Taking a leap of faith and renting a ROM for 30 days.
5. Being highly impressed by the results and purchasing a ROM.
6. Becoming a ROM enthusiast and trying to persuade friends.
7. Being ignored and ridiculed by the friends who think you've lost your mind.
8. After a year of using the ROM your friends admiring your good shape.
9. You telling them (again) that you only exercise those 4 minutes per day.
10. Those friends reluctantly renting the ROM for a 30 day trial.
    Then the above cycle repeats from point 5 on down.

The more we tell people about the ROM the less they believe it.

From 4 minutes on the ROM you get the same results as from 20 to 45 minutes aerobic exercise (jogging, running, etc.) for cardio and respiratory benefits, plus 45 minutes weight training for muscle tone and strength, plus 20 minutes stretching exercise for limberness/flexibility.

Order a **FREE** DVD or video from **www.FastExercise.com** or call (818) 787-6460

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RENT A ROM FOR 30 DAYS. RENTAL APPLIES TO PURCHASE.

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